

> THE VERSUS ISSUE /

WHO WILL SURVIVE  
OUR SHOWDOWN  
OF HOT DEBATES?

# The Hockey News

## OVIE VS. STAMKOS

> McDAVID VS. EICHEL

> LEAFS VS. HABS

SID VS. TOEWS <

AHL VS. KHL <

EVANDER  
KANE

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# The Hockey News

Nov. 9, 2015  
Vol. 69 No. 06

thn.com

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Winnipeg's problem is now Buffalo's solution, but Kane remains bitter about how the Jets (mis)handled him

*By Ken Campbell*

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*With Mike Brophy*

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Stephan Moreau helped develop a new tool to change skate blades, and in the process he began to repair his PTSD

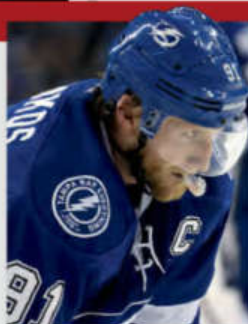
*By Jared Clinton*

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**ON THE COVER (CAN)** Carey Price by Alain Desjean; Dion Phaneuf by KC Armstrong;  
**(US)** Alex Ovechkin and Steven Stamkos by KC Armstrong



# I CAN'T SIT STILL ANY LONGER

My tolerance for fighting has finally broken. How many more tragic enforcer stories do we need to hear?



**LESS THAN 48 HOURS AFTER NEWS** of Todd Ewen's death broke, I was at a pre-season game that was predictably flat. Accordingly, the crowd was placid...until the possibility of a fight materialized. Patrons stood and cheered, willing the two players to go.

I remained sitting, as I always do during a scrap, only this time it was different. The bloodlust that filled the arena two days after we lost yet another enforcer felt almost shameful. For years, I've been ambivalent about fighting, not supportive, but tolerant. Ewen's tragedy served as a tipping point. I can't sit still any longer.

Ewen joins a ballooning list of pugilists who have died young or admitted to suffering from work-related depression and/or addiction. That roll includes, but is not limited to: Reg Flemming, John Kordic, Bob Probert, Gino Odjick, Wade Belak, Rick Rypien, Derek Boogaard, Darren McCarty, Mike Peluso, Rich Clune, Steve Montador, Chris Nilan and Ewen. Commissioner Gary Bettman's stance on the issue is that of a lawyer's. He consistently says no conclusive proof has been produced in the medical community linking repeated head trauma and chronic traumatic encephalopathy. As such, the league hasn't taken any action in recent years to quell the most obvious head shot of all, the punch.

But the circumstantial evidence is mounting rapidly. We understand fighting isn't the exclusive, or perhaps even the leading, cause of concussions. We also understand non-enforcers have been afflicted with depression or substance abuse (though, anecdotally, this list is shorter, and the enforcer community is miniscule compared to the entire NHL population). What we don't understand is the gamble the NHL and the Players' Association are taking with their status quo approach.

Fighting has been trending downward, organically, for a few years and there's a theory enforcers will be extinct relatively soon. Why not hasten the process and act affirmatively by ejecting players for fighting? Why risk leaving a legacy of neglect? If this is about damage control on a payout that might be awarded to the concussion lawsuit plaintiffs, shame on the NHL. If it's about something else, a more altruistic objective, please let us know. In the interim, more players will absorb preventable blows to the head that might cause serious and irreversible harm. My conscience can no longer support that.

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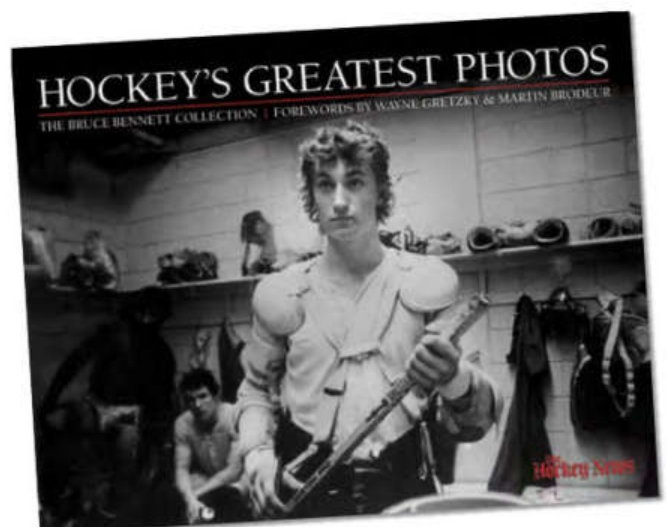
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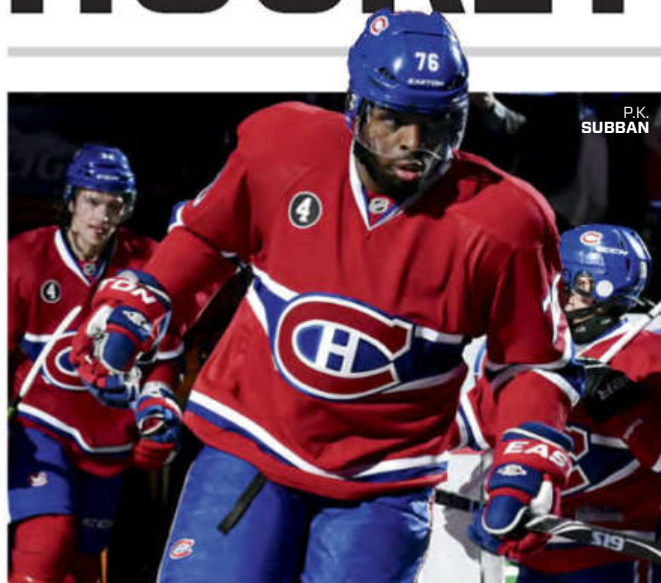
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# INSIDE HOCKEY



P.K. SUBBAN

## WEST STILL BEST BUT JUST BARELY

What used to be Ice Cube vs. Vanilla Ice is now more like 2Pac vs. Biggie as the gap between West and East has closed

**T**HERE'S SOMETHING SPECIAL about the THN predictions meeting every year. Our readers constantly ask about it. They picture a room full of screaming debaters, and they're not far off. It's a lot of fun hammering out the standings team by team. In recent years, however, picking the Stanley Cup has been the least suspenseful part of the day. Chicago. Los Angeles.

Chicago. Los Angeles. "Whose turn is it this year? Oh yeah, Chicago." That was uttered in the summer 2014 meeting before we correctly chose the Hawks. This year, it took very little infighting to reach an Anaheim Ducks consensus. It's become a foregone conclusion "Western Conference powerhouse team X" wins the Stanley Cup. The Eastern Conference has emerged as the West's cute

tagalong sibling, regularly outclassed on the biggest stage. The West has won the past four championships, five of the past six and seven of the past nine.

Utter Western dominance is the public perception, and there's no denying the West's hold on the one accolade that matters most, Lord Stanley's mug. But more than a handful of peripheral trends suggest the grip is slipping.

In the past five seasons (2010-11 to 2014-15), Western Conference teams are 916-585-205 against the East in regular season play, good for a .597 points percentage. The East is 790-690-226 with a .529 points percentage. Those numbers suggest Western supremacy, but consider that, in 2009-10, the margin was .626 for the West to .494 for the East. The West has trended down to .600, then .540, and back up to .607 before dipping again to .578 in 2014-15. The East head-to-head over the next four seasons: .539, .565, .517, .537. The competitive gap between the two conferences is narrowing slowly but surely. Trend or fluke? And what's the cause if it's the former?

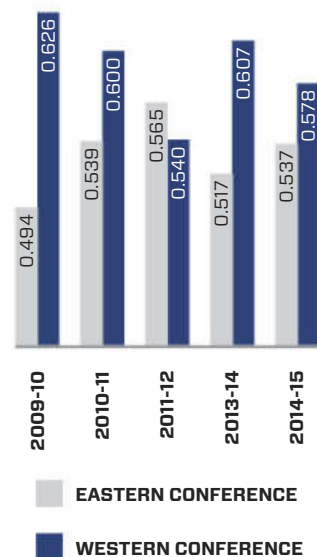
There's a reason why Dallas Stars GM Jim Nill paid Antti Niemi big money this summer to come in and back up Kari Lehtonen: travel. Nill worried his team's schedule was too taxing, and that reflects a problem many Western Conference teams face. Heading west to east produces a harsher

jet lag effect than vice versa, flying against the rotation of the Earth. It's a scientific fact travelling east shortens the 24-hour day, and the body clock struggles to keep up and correct its circadian rhythm, "believing" it should be awake longer, leading to insomnia and sleep deprivation. It's a problem since most teams travel the day or night before a road game and thus endure a night with poorer quality sleep than normal if they head west to east. "Am I travelling after we played at home to the east, when we lose an hour? That would be a big disadvantage," said Nashville Predators GM David Poile. "If I'm travelling west in my division, and I don't lose any time on back-to-back games, that's way better than travelling east."

What Poile means is Central teams are unique in that they cross into new time zones in both directions, east and west, when playing against the other three divisions. So while his Preds can be at a disadvantage heading east, they get the body-

## CONFERENCE CLASHES

*Western Conference teams would lick their chops whenever they went east. Over the past five full seasons, Eastern Conference clubs have picked up ground head-to-head with their out-of-conference foes*





clock advantage when they travel within their conference to play Pacific Division teams.

Lou Lamoriello, GM of the Toronto Maple Leafs and longtime New Jersey Devils GM before that, sees the recent competitive shift as more the result of the East's reaction to travel than the West's. He believes the West did well in the past visiting the East because of smart scheduling, packing many games close together. "I don't think they travel more," Lamoriello said. "I think they play more games during the length of time they're here. And if I were a Western team, I would do that. I'd come out here and I'd say 'Let's stay there 10 days. We can go play Philadelphia, New Jersey, the Rangers, the Islanders, Boston, Montreal, Toronto. We're all within an hour flight. And you've got the body clock at the same status.'"

After realignment in 2013-14, the NHL upped inter-conference games from 18 to 28 for the East, which has 16 teams, and 32 for the West, which has 14 teams. Western teams now visit Eastern Conference opponents 16 times a year instead of nine. It will be fascinating to see how fatigue factors into 3-on-3 play, too. Will the Vancouver Canucks have the same bounce in their collective step if they reach overtime Nov. 7 after they've travelled cross-country to Buffalo for a 1 p.m. game, when their body clocks tell them they're playing at 10 a.m.?

One reason why Chicago and L.A. are regarded so highly, and why they've had great success in recent years, is their dominant puck possession play. The expression "copycat league" exists for a reason.

What if the Eastern Conference is altering its schemes to mimic the West's best? Five seasons ago, seven of the NHL's top 10 Corsi Close ("close" applies to games within one goal in periods 1 and 2 or tied in period 3) teams hailed from the West. The next year it was six of 10, and it's been an even East-West split for three straight seasons. "There's no question people want puck possession," Lamoriello said, laughing heartily. "The teams that have been winning have had the puck more than the other team, but you're going to see that no matter who they are, and no matter who's playing. If you win on a given night, the puck possession is where it should be: on the right side."

And Poile challenges the idea the East has "improved" in puck possession versus the West. He wants to know the analytics when the conferences play head to head, a measure difficult to compile in this young era of advanced stats. Regardless of the result, though, he feels studying the cross-continent rivals must take a backseat to one's own neighbors. "Whatever you think the Chicago Blackhawks look like, the St. Louis Blues, we want to be closer to that than to some other teams that are not in our conference," he said. "Those are the teams we have to beat on a more consistent basis."

Whatever we believe about puck possession, it seems the league's better puck stopping resides in the East right now. Four of the past five Vezina Trophy winners hail from the East, and there's no East Coast media bias there, as the league's GMs, not the Professional Hockey Writers Association,



decide the Vezina. The East has Carey Price, Henrik Lundqvist, Tuukka Rask and Braden Holtby. A cross-section of the NHL's starting goaltenders reveals the East has poached Ben Bishop, Roberto Luongo, Jaroslav Halak, Cory Schneider and, because of realignment, Sergei Bobrovsky in recent seasons. If you count 'Bob' as an East goalie now, that's five straight Vezinas for the East. Only Ryan Miller and Cam Talbot qualify as major additions in the West.

Goaltending aside, has the Eastern Conference gained ground on the West because the East simply has more star power now? The conferences have shared the top 10 yearly scorers pretty evenly over the past half decade, but the East has produced three of the past four Art Ross victors. The past four Hart Trophy winners

## FULL TO OVERFLOWING

The East has owned the NHL Awards of late, including Ovie's three straight Richard Trophies.

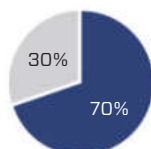
as league MVP come from the East, and before anyone screams East Coast bias again, note that the NHL players have voted an Eastern Conference player MVP with the Ted Lindsay Award in four of five seasons as well. The East owns three of the past four Norris Trophies thanks to Erik Karlsson and P.K. Subban's superstardom. The past four goal-scoring champs: all East, a blend of Alex Ovechkin and Steven Stamkos. Of the NHL's 50 biggest salary cap hits this season, 29, or 58 percent, belong to Eastern Conference players.

By no means can we say the East has overtaken the West as the NHL's top conference yet. But the numbers suggest we've at least entered an era of relative parity between the two. The East houses more of the game's most dynamic players nowadays, particularly in net and at forward, and the increased travel works in its favor. To really earn the West's respect, though, it's time to gain ground in the most important stat category: Cups.

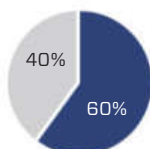
— MATT LARKIN

## PUCK HOGS

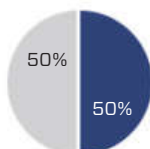
Puck possession is now the M.O. of every successful team. Only three of the top 10 Corsi teams were from the East five seasons ago. Today it's an even split between conferences



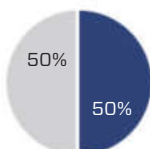
2009-10



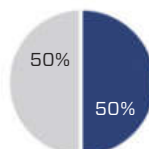
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2011-12



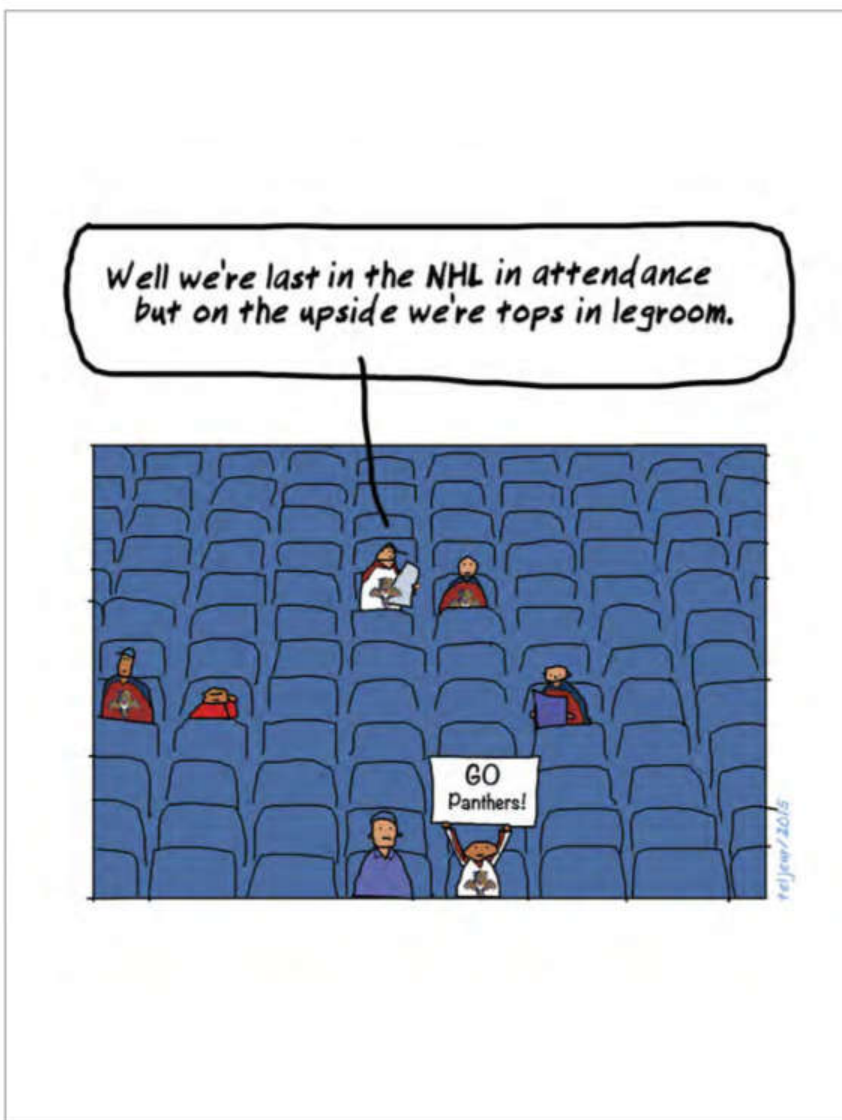
2013-14



2014-15

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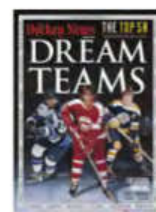
By Charlie Teljeur



## WANDERING REMPARTS

**UNRAVELLING** the history behind major junior in Montreal and Quebec City will make some readers in the former angry and make us some allies in the latter.

The Hockey News recently released a commemorative issue entitled *Dream Teams*, which ranks major junior and U.S. college programs based on the quality of talent they've pushed to the NHL. But first we had to set guidelines.



Nowhere is team lineage more confusing than in the QMJHL. The Montreal Junior Canadiens played in the OHA until 1972, then suspended operations for a year. When the Kingston Canadians were created in 1973, it was done using the shell of the Junior Canadiens franchise, but we're not linking the two in *Dream Teams*. Some historians connect the Junior Canadiens to the Montreal Bleu Blanc Rouge, which are today the Rouyn-Noranda Huskies. But we're saying the starting point for that franchise is the Bleu Blanc Rouge. Sadly, that means Montreal Junior Canadiens greats such as Gilbert Perreault, Serge Savard and Guy Lapointe aren't part of this exercise. It's a reach to link them from a team that suspended operations across to another league.

The Quebec Remparts history is also a tangled web. It started in 1969 with the creation of the QMJHL, went into a three-year dormancy in 1985, moved to Longueuil in 1988, then Verdun in 1991, then folded in 1994. Meanwhile, the current Remparts got their start in 1990 as the Beauport Harfangs before moving to Quebec in 1997. That team claims the history and records of the original Remparts franchise.

*Dream Teams ranks the top 50 hockey factories, spanning 50-plus years of development. It's available on newsstands or at [thn.com/mag](http://thn.com/mag)*



## In The CARDS

**ON NOV. 10, 1985, PELLE LINDBERGH** was driving while intoxicated when he lost control of his Porsche and struck a wall. He was declared brain dead a few hours after and taken off life support a day later. Lindbergh was voted posthumously as a starter in the 1986 All-Star Game. One of his hockey cards also honored his memory. While Lindbergh's 1985-86 Topps trading card was issued before his death, his O-Pee-Chee card came out in early 1986. The card company added a black stripe with the text "1959-1985" as a solemn reminder of the goalie's tragic passing.

BY SAL BARRY OF PUCKJUNK.COM



# MAKING AN EXAMPLE

Torres deserved a 41-game ban because he couldn't do the one thing that matters most to the NHL: evolve his unsafe behavior

BY MATT LARKIN

**T**HE SHARKS' RAFFI TORRES WAS in trouble the second he caught the Ducks' Jakob Silfverberg with a questionable hit Oct. 3. If the NHL deemed the play suspendable, Torres' history of repeatedly violating one rule – 48.1, illegal check to the head – would greatly expand his sentence length.

But did anyone expect 41 games? It was a staggeringly strong decision by the NHL's department of player safety.

Torres' history had no impact on the decision to suspend or not. Repeat offenses and injuries only impact suspension length. The league must first decide if a play is illegal at all. And the hit was. It was late and high.

Then it was time for the department to factor in Torres' past offenses. Thanks to a major knee injury, he had barely played the past two years, which

could've cleaned his slate under CBA rules because he wasn't suspended during that time. But Torres only played 15 games between the Silfverberg hit and his previous suspension for hitting Jarret Stoll in 2013. It's a tiny gap between incidents. "I know he came and tried to change his behavior, and he only played 15 games since he got hurt, but he obviously doesn't get it," said Stephane Quintal, the NHL's senior vice-president of player safety. "A warning, fine or suspension 11 times. He's put us in a tough position."

It's also important to note it's not just that Torres has been suspended so often, but that the bans are for the same act: late hit, high hit, head targeted. It was a highly specific behavior, and he wasn't changing it. The league had no choice but to come down hard: the ban is the



longest game-specific suspension in league history (*see sidebar*).

The DOPS members say Torres wants to change. After his previous suspension, he visited their office. They shared video with him. He showed a willingness to learn. The league believes it's less a matter of malice than it is being unable

## FOOL ME ONCE...

Torres earned such a large ban because he violated the exact same league rule over and over.

to shed muscle memory of how to hit. "We don't want to ruin his career," said DOPS vice-president Damian Echevarrieta. "We just want to make sure he doesn't ruin anybody else's." **THE**

## LONGEST SUSPENSIONS



### BILLY COUTU

#### SUSPENSION: LIFE

Only NHL player to earn a lifetime ban for a game-related incident. He assaulted two refs in 1927 Cup final. Reinstated but never returned.



### MARTY MCSORLEY

#### SUSPENSION: 1 GAME

McSorley earned a rest-of-season suspension for swinging his stick into Donald Brashear's head in 2000. Extended to a calendar year.



### CHRIS SIMON

#### SUSPENSION: 30 GAMES

This punishment was for a skate stomp on Jarkko Ruutu. Simon earned a rest-of-year ban the season prior for another incident.



### JESSE BOULERICE

#### SUSPENSION: 25 GAMES

Attacked Ryan Kesler in 2007 with a jumping cross-check to the face. Boulerice was banned a year for stick swinging as a junior, too.

# NHL'S OPENING ACTS

First isn't always best, but the list of arena-opening goals is dotted with some remarkable players



**W**HEN CHICAGO'S ARTEM Anisimov backhanded the puck past Thomas Greiss in the Oct. 9 contest between the Blackhawks and Islanders, Anisimov joined an exclusive club.

His shorthanded marker was the first goal at the Barclays Center, the Islanders' new home after living at Nassau Coliseum since 1972.

The goal continued the trend of the visiting team tallying first: in only 11 rinks has the home team baptized its new digs.

Here are the 30 members of the arena-opening-goal club, with all the info around their historic tally, via Elias Sports Bureau. — **EDWARD FRASER**

DATE	HOME	VISITOR	VENUE	FIRST GOAL	TEAM	PERIOD	TIME
2/18/1968			1 MADISON SQUARE GARDEN	WAYNE HICKS		1	12:12
10/13/1979			3 REXALL PLACE	BLAIR MACDONALD		1	12:06
12/27/1979			2 JOE LOUIS ARENA	BRIAN SUTTER		1	11:05
10/15/1983			3 SCOTIABANK SADDLEDOME	JARI KURRI		1	1:51
10/8/1993			2 HONDA CENTER	AARON WARD		1	2:34
10/14/1993			1 SAP CENTER AT SAN JOSE	AL MACINNIS		1	8:36
1/25/1995			5 UNITED CENTER	JOE MURPHY		2	11:33
1/26/1995			3 SCOTTRADE CENTER	CRAIG JOHNSON		2	2:14
10/7/1995			4 TD GARDEN	SANDY MOGER		1	10:40
10/9/1995			3 ROGERS ARENA	STEVE YZERMAN		1	19:44
1/17/1996			0 CANADIAN TIRE CENTRE	ANDREI KOVALENKO		2	11:12
3/16/1996			4 BELL CENTRE	VINCENT DAMPHOUSSE		1	6:13
10/5/1996			1 WELLS FARGO CENTER	BRAD SMYTH		1	3:51
10/12/1996			1 FIRST NIAGARA CENTER	VYACHESLAV KOZLOV		1	15:41
10/20/1996			5 AMALIE ARENA	BRIAN BRADLEY		1	11:46
12/5/1997			3 VERIZON CENTER	STEVE WASHBURN		1	7:23
10/9/1998			4 BB&T CENTER	JASSEN CULLIMORE		1	17:29
10/10/1998			0 BRIDGESTONE ARENA	RAY WHITNEY		3	2:26
2/20/1999			3 AIR CANADA CENTRE	TODD WARRINER		1	6:04
10/13/1999			2 PEPSI CENTER	MILAN HEJDUK		2	17:40
10/20/1999			2 STAPLES CENTER	ANSON CARTER		1	4:12
10/29/1999			2 PNC ARENA	ANDREI KOVALENKO		2	4:30
10/7/2000			3 NATIONWIDE ARENA	BRUCE GARDINER		1	7:34
10/11/2000			3 XCEL ENERGY CENTER	PETER WHITE		1	13:41
10/5/2001			4 AMERICAN AIRLINES CENTER	CLIFF RONNING		1	7:12
12/27/2003			1 GILA RIVER ARENA	SCOTT WALKER		1	14:17
10/27/2007			1 PRUDENTIAL CENTER	CHRIS NEIL		2	5:01
10/7/2010			2 CONSOL ENERGY CENTER	DANIEL BRIERE		2	2:51
10/9/2011			1 MTS CENTRE	MIKE CAMMALLERI		1	3:05
10/9/2015			2 BARCLAYS CENTER	ARTEM ANISIMOV		1	13:28





# HOCKEY'S TRUE COLORS

New documentary *Soul On Ice* details the rich history of black players and challenges the sport's stereotypes

**S**TREWN ACROSS THE CONSIDERABLE couch space at the home of Mike Wilson, Toronto memorabilia collector: Joel Ward, Devante Smith-Pelly and Anthony Stewart. They represent just a small chunk of the NHL's growing black population.

There's tension in the air as intrepid documentarian Damon Kwame Mason tinkers with the audio of a giant home theatre setup. He's about to unveil his labor of love, *Soul On Ice: Past Present & Future*. He wants everything to be perfect.

He's on a mission to show that black hockey roots run deeper and longer than so many of us realize, and he hopes to shatter stereotypes of what it means to be a black player today.

The seeds of Mason's project were planted in his childhood, playing road hockey on the

streets of Toronto. Every kid pretended to be his favorite player, and Mason loved Guy Lafleur. "No, you can't be Lafleur," he remembers one kid telling him, because Lafleur was white.

A handful of black players were NHLers at the time, including Mike Marson and Tony McKegney. Willie O'Ree had broken the NHL color barrier in 1960-61. But it was the 1970s. The world was less educated on these kinds of facts, including Mason. He gave in to social norms during those awkward adolescent years when everyone just wants to fit in with the other kids. He played organized hockey a couple seasons but stopped when he began hanging out with a predominantly black group of friends at school. "If you were black, you listened to hip-hop, and you played basketball, and you did all the things black people did," he

## UNITED FRONT

Mason, left, had dozens of black NHLers, including Malcolm Subban, support him for the film.

said. "If you started listening to heavy metal, they would call you 'whitewashed.' So I almost said, 'I have to stay in this little box.'"

The divided mentality between the cultures bothered him, and it helped inspire the idea for *Soul on Ice* years later.

Mason felt compelled to learn more about the history of black players. He wanted to let the black community know not only that it should give hockey a try, but also that far more of its members had done so already than people realized. It irked him that many Americans knew about the Harlem Globetrotters in basketball and the Negro leagues in baseball but that Canadians had little to no knowledge of the Colored Hockey League, a circuit dating back to 1895 in Nova Scotia. "I started printing out all these articles and putting them in a folder and said, 'One day, I'm going to do a documentary about blacks in hockey,'" he said.

Getting the project off the ground wasn't easy. Mason was a first-time filmmaker but needed the voices of prominent black players to tell his story. It helped he had his friend and ex-NHLer Georges Laraque to make a "sizzle reel" and show the project was legit. One by one, players began participating in the project, from classic heroes like O'Ree, to legends such as Grant Fuhr to modern stars like Wayne Simmonds. "It was a great movie," Stewart said. "I feel a sense of pride. It was done really tastefully. I think the overall message was that hockey is for everyone, and if you can change one kid's mind from having second thoughts about playing hockey...when they see the past, present and future of black hockey, it's motivation for them to play the game. The documentary has done its job." — **MATT LARKIN**

*Soul On Ice* premiered at the Edmonton Film Festival Oct 7. Go to [thn.com/soulonice](http://thn.com/soulonice) to read an extended version of this story.



## PIECES OF HISTORY

These recent hockey documentaries will thrill and educate you simultaneously

### 1. RED ARMY (2014)

The Central Red Army team obliterated its competition during the Cold War years, largely because its military ties allowed it to hand-pick the Soviet Union's best players. This critically acclaimed doc tells the squad's turbulent history through former captain Slava Fetisov.

### 2. THE BROAD STREET BULLIES (2010)

Flyers owner Ed Snider was tired of seeing his team intimidated. His solution: build the scariest team ever. This film is the definitive look at the wild, violent Philly heyday.

### 3. THE LAST GLADIATORS (2011)

Oscar-winning director Alex Gibney takes you inside the unwritten code each goon follows, using Chris 'Knuckles' Nilan's career as the backbone for the tale.

### 4. PUNCHED OUT: THE DEATH OF DEREK BOOGAARD (2011)

The *New York Times* played a big role in bringing to light the impact fighting and concussions have on the brain with this short doc about the life and death of Boogaard.

### 5. HBO 24/7: ROAD TO THE WINTER CLASSIC (2010)

Not a film but a groundbreaking series, taking viewers inside dressing rooms, on road trips, onto training tables and into players' lives.



# QUICK'S SILVER LINING SUMMER

Missing the playoffs meant more training time than ever and peak physical condition for the Kings goalie

**B**EN PRENTISS HATES USING clichés, and he isn't one to actively pump the tires of his clients. As the off-season strength and conditioning coach for some of the biggest names in the NHL, he's a no-B.S., all-business trainer.

Which is why it's hard for him to talk about Jonathan Quick. For the first time in four years, Prentiss had a full off-season to train him properly after Quick became his client in 2011, and he's really happy with the results. "He's in the best shape of his life, he honestly is," Prentiss said. "I just hate to say it, because that's what every trainer says about his guys at the end of the summer. But he really is... He's as light as he's been, he's as lean as he's been, he's super

explosive and really strong."

In Quick's first summer with Prentiss, the partnership paid immediate dividends, as the Los Angeles Kings went on to win the franchise's first championship in 2012. But success and injury conspired to limit their training time together in subsequent summers.

After winning his first Cup, Quick had back surgery in August 2012, and it took much longer to heal than expected. Then came the lockout. Quick got in only a month of training with Prentiss, and he wasn't medically cleared to play until the lockout was over. Still, in the shortened 2012-13 season, L.A. made it to the Western final. It didn't end until June 8, however, so Quick couldn't hit the gym

until July, which left only two months to train. Despite that, the Kings went on to win their second Cup in 2013-14. Of course, that forced Quick and Prentiss into another severely compressed training schedule, further compromised by Quick having off-season wrist surgery. "We trained everything one arm," Prentiss said. "There's a bilateral deficiency that the brain recognizes, so even though you train one arm, there's still research that's been shown that you can still increase strength neutrally on the other side. Not a lot,

## EMPTY TANK

Years of deep post-season runs before last season gave Quick's body little time to recover.

quite been himself. After tearing up the NHL in 2011-12, Quick has put up rather ordinary numbers, at least by his standards (see pg. 11). He did post a 1.86 goals-against average and .934 save percentage in the 2013 playoffs, but that's been his lone stretch of excellence over the past three seasons.

Expect that to change in 2015-16. Because the Kings missed the playoffs, Quick

“ HE'S AS LIGHT AND LEAN AS HE'S BEEN. HE'S SUPER EXPLOSIVE AND REALLY STRONG – Ben Prentiss

but even the smallest amount helps. I think he had (a cast) on for the first five weeks that we trained. I think he was cast-less for maybe only four weeks."

Since that first summer with Prentiss and then winning his first Stanley Cup, Quick hasn't

was able to start training in May. He was working out with Prentiss four or five times a week throughout the summer, as well as seeing a soft-tissue massage therapist twice a week and a stretch therapist once a week. By the end of July, around



## QUICK TIMELINE



the time Prentiss' clients begin the on-ice component of their training, Quick had already gone through 54 off-ice workouts, a huge increase from previous off-seasons.

Quick, originally from Milford, Conn., stayed in Manhattan's Greenwich Village this summer, which isn't far from Prentiss' training facility in Darien, Conn. Unlike most players – who get customized programs, fly home to do their training and then check-in with Prentiss throughout the summer – Quick had daily hands-on personal training from Prentiss.

Even though Quick spent his off-season on the East Coast, the Kings kept tabs on him throughout the summer. Matt Price, L.A.'s strength and conditioning coach, was in regular contact with Prentiss, getting updates on the team's star goalie. "Ben and I agreed on virtually every bullet point when it comes to Jonathan's training," Price said this past summer. "When you have some cohesiveness between the phi-



losophies, and you have a guy like Ben who has experience and expertise on the ground helping Jonathan, I expect a great product coming back into Los Angeles."

And that's exactly what L.A. got back. According to Prentiss, Quick met or surpassed every metric set out for him by the Kings at the beginning of the summer – from weight and body fat to strength and power.

### KEEP YOUR FRIENDS CLOSE

Quick resided in New York this off-season for more hands-on work with trainer Prentiss.

"Ben focused in on some of the things that Jonathan needed to get done, and we had the luxury of time," Price said. "Jonathan was given the framework with which to work, and he and Ben got the job done."

— RONNIE SHUKER

## The Big DIPPER

Since posting insane numbers in 2011-12, Jonathan Quick has seen a significant statistical dip in the following three campaigns. The hope is a full off-season of training and rest will turn things around.

### Regular season

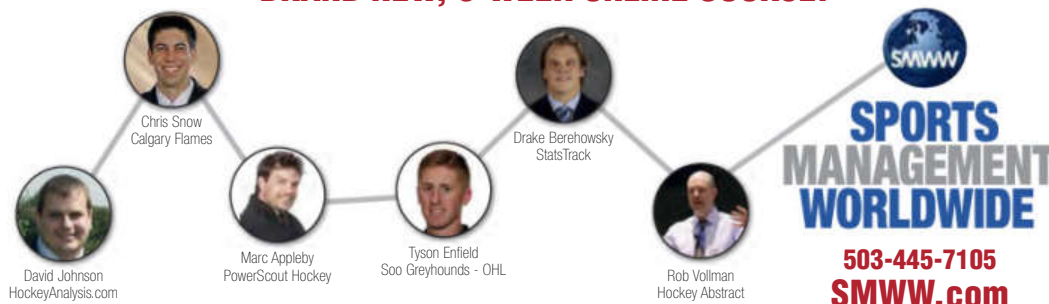
Year	GAA	SP
2011-12	1.95	.929
2012-13	2.45	.902
2013-14	2.07	.915
2014-15	2.24	.918

### Playoffs

Year	GAA	SP
2011-12	1.41	.946
2012-13	1.86	.934
2013-14	2.58	.911
2014-15	n/a	n/a

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# EVANDER KANE

*The Sabres' new star is known for his sharp attire and sharper tongue, and he's proud of that. He's happy to leave Winnipeg and ready to start lighting the lamp again in Buffalo*

**BY KEN CAMPBELL**

**T**HE FIRST THING YOU SEE when you walk into the concourse of the First Niagara Center is a 33-foot high-by-15-foot wide banner of Evander Kane with the words "Next Chapter" scrolled across the bottom. It's a reference to the Sabres' new philosophy, a message to fans that years of losing and incompetence are now being replaced by hope. Those words, though, could just as easily apply to Kane him-

self. Because there's no one in the NHL who needs to turn the page more than he does. You name it and Kane needs a fresh new start from it. From injuries. From Winnipeg. From pictures of him holding money to his ear. From all the noise he invites and then seems bewildered by when it's so darn loud.

The next chapter looks promising on the ice and around it. Owner Terry Pegula has taken what was once a barren wasteland and revitalized it by building HarborCenter, a hockey mecca that doubles as the Sabres' practice rink, which is accompanied by two hotels, a vibrant sports bar and a revitalized Erie Canal where people can actually spend time and do things. The next chapter for the Sabres on the ice features Kane as a prominent character. And Kane is eager for a new beginning himself, going so far as to tell his custom suit guy he wanted an entirely new wardrobe built for him for his move to western New York. "It's a fresh start, and it's something I was seeking for a long, long time," Kane said after a recent practice. "Something I asked for a long time finally came to fruition. Yeah, I asked for a trade every off-season in Winnipeg."

If you're looking for subtle, well, Kane doesn't do that so well. This past summer, he rented out a billboard on Sunset Boulevard in Los

Angeles to profess his undying love for his supermodel girlfriend, Mara Teigen. She thought it was cute and it worked. The two patched things up and everyone is cheering for this plucky couple of underdogs to buck the odds and make it in the celebrity world. Kane is brash, opinionated and unwavering. He's not shy about how he has trouble fitting in with a very white sport, and he doesn't seem too worried about putting himself under the red-hot glare in social media. This past summer, for example, he put an item out on Instagram with the tagline, "About last night..." accompanied by a picture of him and Teigen sucking face as though a massive asteroid was about to hit Earth at any second.

Each of the past three summers, Kane asked for a trade out of the fishbowl that was Winnipeg. His wish was finally granted last February, when a week after a dress code violation, a late meeting and a no-show for a game led to a feud in the Jets dressing room. The Jets swiftly dealt him and defenseman Zach Bogosian to Buffalo for a boatload of players and prospects. Truth is, though, Kane was never a good fit in Winnipeg, even in his first season there when he scored 30 goals. (He actually had the equivalent of two 30-goal seasons in Winnipeg since he scored 17 during the shortened 2012-13 season.) Every unpaid traffic ticket, every rumor about him skipping out on restaurant bills and having his girlfriend with him on the road, every time he posed for pictures with a wad of money attached to his ear, every time he shaved YMCMB into his scalp became a major *cause celebre* in the league's smallest market.

Kane has never seen the back of a police car or a jail cell, though he was sued in civil court for assault in his home province of British Columbia two summers ago. He's a big, physical player, but isn't known for being dirty or malicious or reckless. He's never had a DUI or a drug charge. Yet people sometimes treat him as though he







#### STIR CRAZY

Kane was tired of calling Winnipeg his NHL home. He says he asked for a trade every off-season there.



should be on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List. Is it because Kane is rich and brash and willing to wave his money in your face (figuratively, of course)? Or is it because he's the son of a black man who came from a small town in Nova Scotia that was first established as a stop on the Underground Railroad? There's little doubt as to what camp Kane inhabits. "There are a lot of guys I could point to that everybody knows publicly who have done a lot worse or been accused of doing a lot worse things than I have," Kane said. "But they don't look like me. They don't look like me."

Willie O'Ree, who was the first person of color to play in the NHL when he suited up for the Boston Bruins in 1958, once said he heard the N-word so much he thought it was a compliment. By Kane's estimation, racism still lurks under the surface. It is much more subtle now. It rears its ugly head when someone of color, like himself, has the temerity to flaunt his celebrity and riches. "Jealousy is a disease," he said. "It really is."

But how are we to know what the motivation is when you have a player who is so unlike the others when it comes to self-promotion? Many NHL players have the personality beaten out of them or they become programmed to say nothing more than, "We have to take it one shift at a time and get it in deep and work hard." Kane is not wired that way, which is why he signed a deal with the Wilhelmina modeling agency this past summer and plans to parlay his swarthy good looks and penchant for style into a parallel career.

And there's nothing wrong with that. It's just that, while Kane thinks there are racial undertones at work, hockey is a milieu where people are praised for playing for the crest on the front of the sweater, not the name on the back. Take Sabres rookie Jack Eichel, for instance. He was given the No. 41 in the pre-season and he dutifully wore it, playing out a charade that he still had to earn his place on the roster and the No. 15 that came with it. Combine that with Winnipeg, where guys like Thomas Steen are heroes, and it's a cauldron of narrow attitudes that Kane found a little difficult to handle.

And Kane claims the Jets didn't make it any easier for him. He said that every time a rumor came out, such as the one that surfaced that he had skipped out on a couple



restaurant bills, "I just didn't feel as though (the Jets) had my back at all. It would have been so simple to just squash it and put it to bed. It just became kind of a big deal.

"Common sense would dictate that I can afford a bill at a restaurant no matter what it is. There'd be no reason for me to do that. If you just default to your common sense, I think at the end of the day you'll realize how ridiculous, how silly and how moronic it really sounded."

(The Hockey News reached out to Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff to respond, but he declined, citing the desire to put the situation behind him now that Kane is playing for another organization.)

It was one thing for Kane to alienate some of the fan base in Winnipeg. It was quite another for his teammates to turn on him. When he showed up to a team meeting wearing a track suit, a clear violation of the team's dress code, a cadre of players led by Dustin Byfuglien threw his clothes in the shower. When a guy is scoring 30 goals and making a contribution to the lineup, it's a lot easier to look past things you might not otherwise. But that was a clear enough message for Cheveldayoff, who dealt Kane to Buffalo a couple days later. Kane had already ended his season down because of a torn labrum in his shoulder. He said his agent, Craig Oster, and Cheveldayoff discussed his injuries at length and all three decided the best thing for Kane would be for him to shut it down and have surgery. "I was playing with

a separated shoulder for a year and a half," Kane said. "I had a broken ankle and a broken hand all at the same time. It wasn't me telling myself I had a torn labrum. It was the team doctor on the Winnipeg Jets telling me, 'You need surgery, and that's the only way you're going to get fixed. You have a broken ankle. You have a broken hand. I'm sacrificing my body playing through pain, doing everything I can to help that team win with the feeling knowing guys don't have my back. I feel the organization doesn't have my back, and you feel unappreciated.'"

Kane said that isn't the case in Buffalo, where everyone is on a fresh slate. He's healthy, playing on a line alongside Eichel in an organization where he feels appreciated on a team that is building toward something. He has three years left on a contract that carries a cap hit of \$5.25 million. This might be the perfect time for Kane to change his ways to become a little more of a cookie-cutter player. But that's not going to happen. Sabres coach Dan Bylsma did his intel on Kane when he took the job in Buffalo, speaking to current Jets coach Paul Maurice and former coach Claude Noel, the latter of whom had his moments dealing with Kane.

Bylsma said the red flags that came up on Kane don't quite square with the player he sees in Buffalo. It's early and everyone is eager to impress. Nothing has gone wrong, and the Sabres, with their new attitude, will get a free ride for much of this season, re-





## PAIN RELIEF

Surgery fixed a separated shoulder for Kane, who played through many injuries in recent seasons.

ardless of how they do in the standings. Bylsma said Maurice and Noel raved about Kane's compete level and how he plays the game. And Bylsma has no problem that Kane might veer off the path once in a while and occupy a world of his own. "The last thing in the world I would want from my players is for them all to be the same," Bylsma said. "I don't need them to be all the same, and Evander is not the same, that's for sure. There's no question about it. What he's shown here is that he's 100 percent a part of this team and wants to go out and win."

For his part, Kane actually regrets some of his past indiscretions, saying people make mistakes whether they're the president of the United States, a professional athlete or an anonymous guy with a desk job. But it's not enough to keep him from seeking the spotlight.

The billboard this past summer came after what was thought to be a rift with his girlfriend, and for a guy to spend that kind of coin, he must have seriously been in the doghouse. Most would spring for flowers or perhaps even a spa day, but that's not the way Kane rolls. "Sometimes you have to go the extra mile," Kane said. "It was fun. It was cool. I wasn't expecting it to get the at-

tention it did in the U.S. That was kind of surprising."

Kane spends a lot of time in L.A. during the off-season, and this past summer he joined the prestigious Wilhelmina agency as part of its fitness division. He did the red carpet thing with Teigen at a couple movie premiers, wearing suits designed by Gentleman's Playbook, a high-end custom suit de-

agent and a suit guy. That's quite an entourage. He's due to have his portfolio shoot in New York in early November but said he will not serve both causes at once. The modelling is for the off-season, and hockey remains his priority. Buffalo might not be Winnipeg, but is he concerned the local fandom might not be too impressed with a guy who sends pictures of his Bentley and

# A LOT OF GUYS HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF DOING A LOT WORSE, BUT THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE ME - EVANDER KANE



signer that services pro athletes, including a good number of NHL players. "Evander is one of my biggest, best and favorite clients," said Tom Marchitelli, the company's owner and creative director. "I have a lot of pro athletes, but I sought out Evander because he's one of the best-dressed athletes in all of sports. He has a real sense of style, and he chooses bold and elegant fabrics."

Kane gets the No. 9 stitched into the interior of each of his jackets. Marchitelli said Kane likes bold designs with two or three contrasting colors and isn't afraid of taking risks. He recently insisted Marchitelli design him a suit from a burgundy fabric with a blue window pane running through it. "He said, 'I just have to have that suit,'" Marchitelli said. "I told him, 'I love it as a sports coat, but if anyone can pull it off as a full suit, you can.'"

So Kane now has a publicist, a fashion

Ferrari out on social media and has a cadre of handlers taking care of him? "You know what hockey misses and why it's not as popular as other sports in the U.S.?" Kane said. "It's because we don't showcase our players' personalities, especially with social media and how easy it is to attack people in our position. Players are afraid to do it because they don't want to be perceived as selfish. They think it's selfish to promote yourself. No, it's business. It's smart. It's how the league is going to grow and how people become successful."

They also become successful by starting in a new place, playing their asses off and returning to a 30-goal form for a team that could desperately use the offense. The early returns have tilted the trade in Winnipeg's favor, largely because Kane and Bogosian have been injured, but everyone is looking for Kane to move the needle back to the middle. He has the speed, the power and the scoring touch to make a contribution, and he's being given a great opportunity to help usher in one of the league's potential superstars in Eichel. The slate doesn't get much cleaner than that. "You're going to see a big-time power forward in this league," Bylsma said. "Is that going to be 30 (goals) or 35 or 40? I don't know what that number is going to be, but that's what we're counting on." **THEY**

# THE VERSUS ISSUE

*What hot hockey debates boil our blood to the verge of knock-down, drag-out fights? We chose pens over swords to settle the following topics once and for all. Who ya got?*

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**BEST CENTER**

# SIDNEY CROSBY

*His scoring stats are indisputable, his will indomitable and his place as the NHL's best center undebatable*

**W**HENEVER SIDNEY CROSBY HAS been out of the Pittsburgh Penguins lineup – and that's been considerably more than he would have wanted over his first decade in the NHL – he works to keep himself sharp. At times, it meant an innovative assignment from former Penguins strength and conditioning coach Mike Kadar. It might go something like this: bounce a tennis ball off of a certain piece of equipment so that it ricochets off of a certain area of the wall and lands in the trash bin. Crosby said Kadar couldn't make those assignments outrageously challenging because he knew Crosby would stay there until he got it, no matter how long.

That kind of competitive streak wrapped around a will to perform at the highest level has helped make Crosby a generational player. Throw in his tremendous strength, things like sharp vision, expert hand-eye coordination and an ability to effectively communicate with his linemates and you've got the best center in the game.

Yes, Chicago's Jonathan Toews has had more Stanley Cup success, but he has also been surrounded with superior supporting casts. Crosby, for a large chunk of his career, has made top-liners out of wingers such as Chris Kunitz and Pascal Dupuis.

An iso cam will show slick moves and goals by both players, but Crosby is far and away the superior offensive talent. In fact, it's not even close.

In raw numbers entering this season, Crosby had career averages of 0.48 goals, 0.88 assists and 1.36 points per game. Toews lagged at 0.39 goals, 0.50 assists and 0.90 points a game.

The assists' difference is most telling. Crosby has honed his scoring skill, but he has always been a playmaker. Imagine a player with his skill and star power working in the corner or along the boards to gain the puck for his wingers.

Well, you don't have to imagine. Crosby does it willingly, just one of the many things that makes him the No. 1 center in the NHL. – **SHELLY ANDERSON**

# JONATHAN TOEWS

*Sorry, 'Sid.' You may have mad skills, but Toews is the total package*

**OVER THE COURSE OF** a full season, Jonathan Toews will never outscore Sidney Crosby. But if you were to match Toews against Crosby in a best-of-seven series, Chicago's captain would emerge the victor. That's because he can do it all.

Toews has the puck skills to turn defenders inside out, yet he also possesses the defensive acumen to shut down the opposition's top line. Defending your end while producing is what being an elite center is all about. And no one is better at doing both than Toews.

Who would you rather have taking a defensive-zone faceoff with a one-goal lead and 30 seconds remaining in the third period: Toews or Crosby? Since 2005-06, only Patrice Bergeron has a better career faceoff percentage than Toews' 56.8 percent win-rate. Crosby barely cracks the top 25 on that list. Even in the off chance Toews loses the draw, he's bound to make the play that breaks up any opposition chance.

Toews is rarely out of position and seldom makes a mistake with the puck, and he can be trusted in any situation. Over their careers, Toews has played almost five hundred shorthanded minutes more than Crosby. His 2012-13 Selke Trophy, and four other top-five Selke finishes, tell you about all you need to know about Toews' defensive ability.

And let's not forget Toews has captained the Blackhawks to three Stanley Cups, and all of them after Crosby won his one and only in 2009.



Still, don't go thinking Toews is all defense. One-on-one, he can embarrass defenders with speed or skill. His lethal wrist shot can give goalies nightmares, and it has helped him score 25-plus goals in each of his past six full seasons. Given a breakaway, Toews often converts. His 40 shootout goals are more than any active player since

that competition was introduced 10 years ago.

Let's put it this way: if you were a coach and were forced to play the two on a line together, Crosby would be the one playing on Toews' wing, not the other way around. – **JARED CLINTON**



## CANADA'S TEAM

# TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS

*From the capital to Cancun, no team captures Canada's heart like the Leafs*

**C**ANCUN, MEXICO, SPRING 2005. I stand in Coco Bongo, one of the city's most popular nightclubs, watching an acrobat dressed as Spider-Man fight an acrobat dressed as the Green Goblin, both attached to wires hanging over the bar. It's a surreal experience. And yet, something distracts from it.

It starts as a murmur. Then a rumble. Then a roar. Taking over the entire club. It's a chant. What the...? "Go Leafs go. Go Leafs go! GO LEAFS GO!"

Yup, we're 1,614 miles from Toronto, it's the middle of the lockout, the season has just been cancelled and fans could not be angrier. Yet the chant blows the roof off Coco Bongo.

Find me a tale of a "Go Habs Go" eruption in Aca-pulco or rowdy Flames fans taking over a bar in Puerto Vallarta. Only the Toronto Maple Leafs, Canada's team, can evoke that type of maniacal, misplaced passion.

A personal anecdote isn't enough to sell the Leafs as a nation's most beloved franchise. Data might suffice, though. For one, Toronto topped our fan ranking system in last year's THN Fan Issue. It ranked second

in the NHL in attendance relative to arena capacity over the previous five seasons despite finishing near the bottom of the standings in four of those years. Their fans also faithfully pack Air Canada Centre despite paying the highest ticket prices in the league. "I definitely think we have one of the greatest fan bases in all of sports," said Shawn Matthias, Mississauga, Ont., native and a new Toronto Maple Leaf. "It's amazing how passionate the fans are here."

But does unconditional support from a beaten-down fan base make the Maple Leafs Canada's team? It helps their cause, but whichever franchise earns the support of a whole nation must have the numbers edge. The Leafs have that, too. Their 1.03 million Twitter followers lead all Canadian teams and trail only Chicago's 1.12 million for the NHL lead. In 2014-15, when Canadian NHL TV ratings plummeted, one of the reasons was a sharp decline in Leaf viewers as the team gradually tanked in the standings. The Leafs have a large enough stake in Canada's overall fan base that their highs and lows can influence how much hockey the country watches as a whole.

It doesn't matter if a beloved, storied team like the Montreal Canadiens has more Stanley Cups, far more recent successes or louder, livelier fans, which it does. Canada's team is the one that represents the most Canadians. Toronto has the unfair advantage of being the country's most populous city, but that doesn't make it any less true that it has the most supporters.

There's a reason why they spill into Cancun and why they pepper NHL arenas in the southern U.S. states as snowbirds in the winter. Travelling Leaf fans have become a phenomenon similar to Pittsburgh Steelers, Dallas Cowboys and Green Bay Packer fans in the NFL, annoying rival teams by taking up too many of their seats.

Canada's team belongs in hockey's capital. And Toronto has the trappings of that status. It's the NHL's media epicenter, home of TSN, Sportsnet, CBC and, yes, The Hockey News. It's the home of Don Cherry, Bob McKenzie and Elliotte Friedman. It's the home of the NHL's department of hockey operations. When the referees call in a goal review, they "check with Toronto." And Toronto houses the Stanley Cup, every major NHL award and the Hall of Fame itself.

And what about the active player population? According to [quanthockey.com](http://quanthockey.com), 34 current NHLers hail from Toronto. Twenty-two come from Edmonton, 18 from Winnipeg, 16 from Montreal, 16 from Calgary, 11 from Ottawa and eight from Vancouver. Growing up in a city doesn't guarantee you cheer for that city's team, but it's likely, and the NHL is loaded with players who grew up Leaf fans. Of the 494 active Canadians in the NHL, 212, or 42.9 percent, hail from Ontario. "Being a Toronto kid," Matthias said, "this is the only team I ever cheered for."

Canada's team has so many fans that many of its own players, and players on other teams, grew up dreaming of wearing its colors. The Leafs may well be a laughing stock in the NHL these days, but they represent the people of their country, right down to the emblem on their sweaters. — **MATT LARKIN**



# MONTREAL CANADIENS

*The Habs hail from the land with deeper hockey roots, and their resume of success embarrasses Toronto's*

**B**ACK IN MARCH, MONTREAL mayor Denis Coderre, the guy who ignited a Twitter war with David Desharnais a couple years ago, proposed that his town and the megalopolis of Toronto become sister cities, calling for a "strategic alliance" between the two. Keeping your friends close and your enemies closer worked out pretty well for Michael Corleone, the fictitious character in *The Godfather* and one of the only Mafia kingpins in history to die of natural causes.

Yeah, it's a little unnatural. Canada's two biggest cities have long represented the country's two solitudes, while their hockey teams have historically been the beacons of everything that represents English and French Canada. Even if the Toronto Maple Leafs have been largely responsible for killing the rivalry with the Montreal Canadiens, there still seems to be this notion that one or the other has to be considered Canada's team. I say "seems to be a notion" because there are those who occupy The Center of the Hockey Universe™ who insist the Maple Leafs are Canada's hockey team.

They're not. And this is not a subjective statement. All you have to do is look at the facts, both the historical ones and those staring us in the face right here and right now.

By almost all accounts, the game of hockey was first played near Halifax in the early 1800s, but it migrated to Montreal, where the first indoor game ever played consisted of a team led by Nova Scotian James Creighton going against a group of students from McGill University. The National Hockey Association and the NHL were born out of meetings at the Windsor Hotel in Montreal, and the first NHL game ever was played in Montreal.

And as far as the Stanley Cup goes, let's get serious here. It's not even close. According to the Society for International Hockey Research, teams from Montreal have their names on the Stanley Cup a total of 51 times: the Canadiens (24), Victorias (nine), Wanderers (eight), Shamrocks (four), Amateur Athletic Association



(four) and Maroons (two). Compare that to just 17 for Toronto, with 13 won by the Maple Leafs, two by the Blueshirts and one each by the Arenas and St. Pats. That's three fewer, by the way, than the 20 times Ottawa has its name on the Cup, with 11 from the Senators and nine from the Ottawa Hockey Club. And, oh yeah, the Canadiens have won the Cup 10 times since the last time the Maple Leafs were champions nearly 50 years ago.

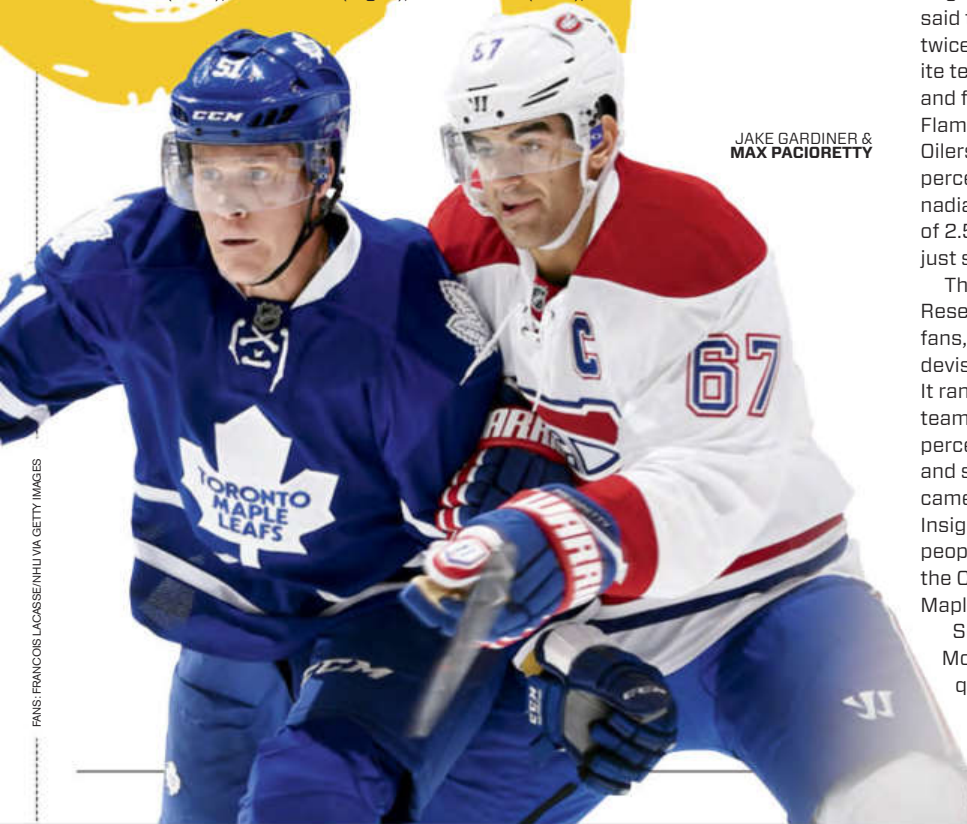
The Leafs haven't won the Cup since 1967, and the Canadiens haven't had a sniff since 1993, so neither team really gets to occupy the high ground when it comes to recent history. But by any measure you want to use, the Canadiens have usurped the Maple Leafs as Canada's team. You can't argue with poll after poll after poll, after all.

In October 2014, a Forum Research poll conducted for CityNews – which is telecast on a network that originated in Toronto – 23 percent of respondents said they cheer for the Canadiens, which was almost twice as many as the 12 percent who said their favorite team was the Maple Leafs or Vancouver Canucks, and far more than those who cheer for the Calgary Flames (seven percent), Winnipeg Jets, Edmonton Oilers (five percent each) or Ottawa Senators (three percent). The poll was conducted among 1,504 Canadians 18 years and older and has a margin of error of 2.5 percent 19 times out of 20 and blah, blah, blah, just so you know it's legitimate.

Then last spring, something called Insignitrix Research conducted a poll of 2,700 Canadian sports fans, 300 in each of nine major cities in Canada, and devised what it called "a sports brand equity index." It ranked teams according to five criteria – the first team that comes to mind, respect for the team, perception of the most loyal fans, team popularity and stadium/arena atmosphere – and the Canadiens came out on top of that one, too. Then last summer, Insights West conducted a poll in which 40 percent of people responded that they were big or casual fans of the Canadiens, compared to just 26 percent for the Maple Leafs and Senators.

So there. It's pretty much a slam-dunk that the Montreal Canadiens are Canada's team. The only question is whether the Toronto Maple Leafs even rank as No. 2. – **KEN CAMPBELL**

JAKE GARDINER &  
MAX PACIORETTY



**BEST GOAL SCORER**STEVEN  
STAMKOS

*From his signature one-timer and pouncing on rebounds, to ankle-breaking dekes and even baseball swings, Stamkos can score anywhere, any way in any given situation*



**S**TEVEN STAMKOS may not fill up a highlight reel like Alex Ovechkin does when it comes to goals, but he sure knows how to fill the net. And he can do it many ways.

Watch any compilation of Stamkos showing off his goal-scoring prowess and there will be shot after shot of his shot – the one where he camps out in the left faceoff circle, stick cocked in the ready position anticipating a pass sliding over from the top of the point right toward his wheelhouse where he steps into the shot and delivers a precision laser shot to the top near corner. In a flash, the puck enters the net as the goaltender helplessly slides in a futile attempt to stop the inevitable from occurring.

That type of goal became the trademark for Stamkos early in his career. The first time he hit the 50-goal mark as a teenager, in 2009-10, Stamkos scored nearly half of his 51 markers on the power play, and many of them came from that exact spot. Teams were helpless to stop it at times, even though they knew what was coming.

With just that weapon alone, Stamkos could be considered the best goal scorer in the game, but there's so much more in his arsenal.

Stamkos has evolved into somebody who can beat goaltenders with a wrist shot coming off the rush. He can charge the net and get a deflection past a netminder. On the power play, he also sets up in the high slot area and can be a triggerman for a quick pass into the center of the ice.

How about on rebounds? He's not

afraid to get to those high-scoring, high-contact areas, looking to pick up a loose puck that comes his way.

Breakaways? Yup, he's become adept at finishing off those as well. Just ask Carey Price, who bit hard on a move in the second round of the playoffs last season as Stamkos broke an eight-game scoring drought.

Then there was the goal he scored in the first game of the 2014 playoffs, also coming against Montreal and its all-world goaltender. Stamkos rushed down ice from his own zone, banked a pass off the boards to himself and had the presence to give a quick flick of his wrists to settle the puck down into the middle of his blade a split-second before wiring a wrist shot from the middle of the right circle to the top far corner. The goal stood out so much that one national columnist, in town to cover the series between the two Atlantic Division rivals, built an entire column around it.

You want more?

There was also the time he utilized his baseball skills, acquired while he was growing up playing America's pastime in Canada. On March 24, 2014, in a game against Ottawa, a rebound popped up into the air as Stamkos sat at the side of the net. While tracking the puck all the way down, he choked up on his stick and proceeded to bat the puck out of midair and into the net. The Lightning centered a season-ticket campaign around the goal with a television advertisement using fans reminiscing about the goal and where they were sitting when they saw it. One commenter said, "It was the most amazing goal I've ever seen."

Stamkos is no one-trick pony. He truly is the NHL's most versatile scoring machine, who can beat you in many ways. — **ERIK ERLÉNDSOON**



*Whichever way you want to slice it – whether through looking at highlight reels or poring over scoring stats – ‘Ovie’ is by far the most lethal goal scorer in the NHL*

**T**HE PUREST THINGS IN life maintain their defining traits however we evaluate them. We can identify a spherical shape, for example, by seeing it or we could hold it in pitch dark and still know what it was. Alex Ovechkin’s purity as a goal scorer functions the same way. Merely watching live footage of him tells us he’s the best in the world at his craft. And even if we’d never laid eyes on him for a second, we’d still know he was peerless. The numbers tell us exactly what the eye test does.

Ovechkin has compiled an eye-popping highlight reel over his 10-year career. No one will ever forget the goal he scored against the Coyotes as a rookie, contorting his body in a seemingly in-human way to beat Brian Boucher, then blowing a kiss at Coyotes coach Wayne Gretzky. Ovechkin has duplicated that effort countless times, showing an amazing ability to put pucks home with defenders draped all over him.

The stats, though, are what really separate ‘Ovie’ from any sniper since Pavel Bure, if not Gretzky. In 10 seasons, he has led the league in goals five times. His 65-goal explosion in 2007-08 is the highest total in a 19-season stretch between 1995-96 and today. Last season, he became the sixth player to notch six 50-goal campaigns. Only Mike Bossy and Wayne Gretzky have done it more. Mario Lemieux, Marcel Dionne and Guy Lafleur are the others in the six-time club. And yet, that company doesn’t even do Ovechkin justice. He’s played in a far lower-scoring era. Apply hockey-reference.com’s score adjuster and Ovechkin has seven 50-goal years and three 60-goal years.

A few seasons back, Ovechkin appeared to be exiting his prime. Washington Capitals coach Dale Hunter cut No. 8’s ice time and tried to shoehorn him into a more defensive role. Ovechkin’s 50-goal years quickly gave way to 30-goal disappointments. He seemed to have a tougher time solving opposing checkers. But then he bounced back in a big way. He regained

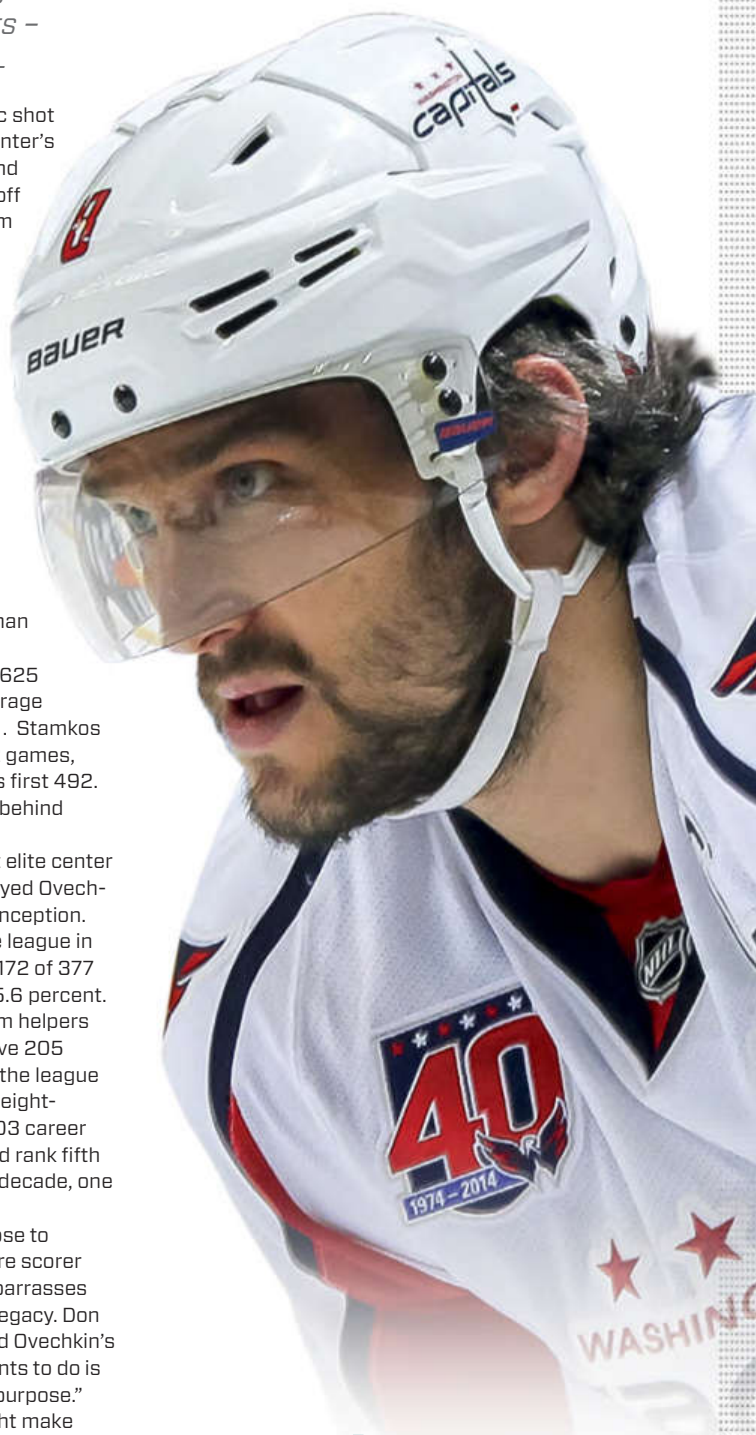
the ability to use his electric shot from all areas of the ice. Hunter’s successors, Adam Oates and Barry Trotz, took the leash off Ovechkin’s game and let him freewheel again. He’s now won the Rocket Richard Trophy three straight seasons, so we’re not just admiring a body of work for a passé superstar. He remains atop the goal-scoring heap, even at 30.

Some may table Steven Stamkos as the world’s best goal scorer today. And ‘Stammer’ is unbelievably talented, blessed with an unmatched one-timer. He’s also the only player other than Ovechkin to notch 60 since 1995-96. But Ovechkin’s 0.625 career goals-per-game average blows away Stamkos’ 0.561. Stamkos has 276 goals through 492 games, while Ovie sniped 308 in his first 492. So Stamkos is already well behind Ovechkin’s pace.

What about the idea that elite center Nicklas Backstrom has buoyed Ovechkin’s numbers? It’s a misconception. Since Backstrom joined the league in 2007-08, he’s assisted on 172 of 377 Ovechkin goals, good for 45.6 percent. Remove all those Backstrom helpers and Ovechkin would still have 205 goals, tying him for 23rd in the league with Patrick Kane over that eight-season span. Ovechkin’s 303 career Backstrom-less goals would rank fifth in the league over the past decade, one ahead of Sidney Crosby.

There’s simply no one close to ‘Alexander the GR8’ as a pure scorer right now, and he really embarrasses the field if you factor in his legacy. Don Cherry recently summarized Ovechkin’s career to THN as, “All he wants to do is score. It’s his one and only purpose.”

While that mentality might make Ovechkin less versatile than Stamkos, it has made him the NHL’s best and purest goal scorer. — **MATT LARKIN**



ALEX

OVECHKIN

## WHO'LL WIN THE CALDER?

JACK  
EICHEL

*Easier competition, an understanding coach and homecooking come in handy*

**T**HINGS COULD NOT HAVE worked out better for Jack Eichel. Sure, everyone wants to go first in the draft, but landing in Buffalo means he's close enough to his Massachusetts home that his parents can make more trips to see him. Plus, he will have all the tools necessary to win the Calder Trophy.

Although the Sabres were putrid last season, much of that was by design. When they traded for Evander Kane, they knew his shoulder injury would keep him out until 2015-16, but now the power forward is ready to ride shotgun with Eichel. With Sam Reinhart or Brian Gionta on the other wing, Eichel has linemates who can finish off his plays or dish to him for a patented rush that leaves defensemen wishing they had started skating backwards a few seconds earlier. Not only that, but Eichel got his feet wet on the penalty kill during the pre-season, scoring shorties in the process. Sure, the Sabres may not want to burden him with too much responsibility right away, but his acumen is further proof that when he doesn't have the puck he is

usually in the process of getting it back – and fast.

Behind the bench, Buffalo welcomes Dan Bylsma, who got a running start with Eichel when the two helped Team USA win a surprise bronze at the World Championship in the Czech Republic last spring. Oh, and Bylsma's intro to the NHL? It was in 2008-09, when he took over in Pittsburgh midway through the season and led the Penguins to the Stanley Cup. His leading scorers were young centers Evgeni Malkin and Sidney Crosby – so the man knows how to deal with burgeoning talent.

Eichel also has another advantage in the Calder race – he's playing in the worst division in the NHL. Sure, his Sabres aren't helping, but he doesn't have to face the California killers that Connor McDavid will see on the regular. The odds are in his favor. **– RYAN KENNEDY**

CONNOR  
McDAVID

*Opportunity and weaker opposing goalies make him the McFavorite*

**T**HE BREAD SLICER WAS invented in 1928 and not surprisingly was selected the best invention of the year. Since then, every new thing that comes along is purported to be the best thing since sliced bread. Welcome to the group, Connor McDavid, more commonly referred to as generational talent Connor McDavid.

You'd think anyone described as the best thing since sliced bread or a generational talent should be considered a shoo-in for the Calder Trophy. McDavid can do it all – he's an exceptional skater with quick hands, a creative mind and a tremendous amount of drive. Many fantasy league prognosticators expect him to step right into Edmonton's lineup and average close to a point per game. THN's Ultimate Fantasy Pool Guide has him down to finish

third in NHL scoring with 34 goals and 83 points.

McDavid will play on the Oilers' first power play unit with a combination of Taylor Hall, Jordan Eberle and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. Also working in McDavid's favor to cop the Calder is the likelihood the Oilers will throw him in the deep end quickly. There will be no kid gloves in Edmonton. The franchise is starved for a turnaround, and a mature McDavid has already shown the makeup to wear big-boy pants, starting in Game 1, and tackle any issue thrown his way.

McDavid's biggest competition for the Calder will come from Buffalo's Jack Eichel, also called a generational talent. But Eichel may not even play on the team's first power play unit, and the prevailing wisdom is he won't be thrown to the wolves.

There's also the East-West goaltending factor working in McDavid's favor. Stoppers in the West are turning over this season – Pekka Rinne and Jonathan Quick are the only ones considered top 10 in the NHL. In the East, Eichel will be playing most of his games against the likes of Carey Price, Henrik Lundqvist, Braden Holtby, Ben Bishop, Tuukka Rask, Sergei Bobrovsky, Roberto Luongo and Marc-Andre Fleury. The past four winners of the Vezina Trophy all came from the East.

Shooting advantage McDavid: many of the goalies he'll be facing in the Pacific are unproven starters or stoppers past their prime. **– BRIAN COSTELLO**





# BEARDS VS. CLEAN SHAVEN

ZDENO  
CHARA

*Playoff beards are representative of a player's strength, will, determination and unity. Why put lather on that tradition?*

**CHECK OUT ZDENO CHARA.** Damn that dude looks scary, and he's actually happy here. But photoshop the Cup out of the picture and he could just as easily be getting ready to wrestle a bear barehanded. And I'd fear for the bear.

In the great facial hair debate, it's not a fair fight. Simply put, beards are badass. In this blood-and-guts sport, whiskers are the true mark of a warrior, which is why players like Chara partake in the tradition of letting their brush run wild during the post-season. These modern-day Samsons believe their strength would disappear were they to shave, and they'd sooner kiss Gary Bettman than go near a razor.

Hockey players are widely regarded as the classiest athletes in all of professional sports, but they're also among the toughest. Nowhere is this dichotomy better on display than pregame in the playoffs, when players walk to their respective dressing rooms pimping five-figure designer suits topped with five-inch thick bristles.

And yet it's not like beards are unstylish. Look no further than Henrik Lundqvist. When the best-looking player in the NHL rocks a beard 365 days a year – and grows it during the playoffs – the argument is over. Goodnight. – **RONNIE SHUKER**

*Selling the game to an audience who only tunes in during the playoffs is more important than a silly superstition*

**MANY BRISTLED WHEN NBC Sports'** chairman Mark Lazarus suggested last season that NHL players should lose the playoff beards.

Typical TV, some cried, trying to rule the world.

How dare some suit try to eliminate what has become an annual right of passage. No beards? No way!

Me, I kind of liked the idea. And I understood it, from a TV point of view.

The playoffs are the time of year when more eyes are focused on televisions than at any other point in the season. Many who take a pass on regular season games are suddenly interested in the sport. And given hockey's standing as a growing sport in the U.S., it is an optimal time to sell the game.

So when Player X skates onto the ice looking like he just crawled out of a cave following a two-century nap, those unfamiliar with his boyish good looks don't get a true vision of his appearance. Suddenly every NHLer looks like Brent Burns and, sorry Mr. and Mrs. Burns, for TV purposes, that is not a good thing. – **MIKE BROPHY**

## BETTER LOGO



OLD  
**JETS**

**VS.**

NEW  
**JETS**



**ONE OF THE GREATEST** injustices of the past decade (hyperbole in 3, 2, 1...) was when Mark Scheifele was forced to don a generic, black NHL jersey at the 2011 draft after the newly relocated Winnipeg Jets took him with their first pick. C'mon, you had a perfectly good jersey from the team's original days in Winnipeg. The old logo, which underwent modifications in 1990, was great. That was the crest Teemu Selanne wore when he scored 76 goals as a rookie.

Even if the new Jets technically aren't related to the old ones, they're spiritually linked, and this logo is a big part of that. Not only are the colors great, but the crest is straightforward and hearkens to a time when logos didn't all feel like they'd gone through a corporate marketing grinder first. One of my favorite tests is whether a little kid can draw the crest of their home team, and this one qualifies. It's also cool as a throwback now, even though the Jets could wear it today and not look out of step in the least. Now that we've brought back the Jets, let's bring back the old logo. – **RYAN KENNEDY**

**NOSTALGIA** pollutes our ability to evaluate designs objectively. It tugs at the heartstrings to picture Dale Hawerchuk in the old Jets uniform. But if we focus on what really makes a logo attractive – its aesthetics – there's no way the old Winnipeg Jets crest trumps the current one. Winnipeg's original logos relied on the word 'Jets' over an actual aircraft. It was an artistic nightmare. Jets are inherently cool. They giftwrap themselves as exciting images.

On the modern logo a sleek, aerodynamic fighter plane straddles a maple leaf. It's classy and undeniably Canadian. It's wordless yet leaves no doubt as to which franchise it represents. And the new logo trumps the old one in nostalgia anyway. Far more storied than the old Jets franchise: the Royal Canadian Air Force. The new logo's blue ring and red maple leaf honor 17 Wing Winnipeg, Canada's hub and primary training ground for RCAF personnel. So if you stand by the original Jets crest for a stubborn sense of loyalty, just remember the new one stands for a much older institution. – **MATT LARKIN**

**BEST TOURNAMENT**

# WORLD CUP OF HOCKEY

*If you truly want to see the best play the best when they're in their best shape, ignore the five rings*

**P**UT THE WORLD CUP OF HOCKEY up against the Winter Olympics and there's no contest which tournament holds the moral high ground. One is a soulless, money-hungry sideshow, and the other is the World Cup.

Yeah, I said it.

The Olympics isn't a happy collection of global amateurism and goodwill. It's a corporate, city-devouring greed machine run by a crowd only Sepp Blatter could love. As magical as the Salt Lake City Games were for Team Canada in 2002, type "Olympic corruption" into your favorite search engine and see what articles pop up first. Hockey already has a past with hucksters such as Alan Eagleson and Bruce McNall, no need sully the game any longer.

I know folks have gripes with Gary Bettman, but he has grown hockey in numerous and measurable ways during his tenure, while the head of the NHL Players' Association, Donald Fehr, has taken a union in disarray and put it on square footing, simultaneously fostering a working and largely amicable relationship with Bettman and crew. That's who is in charge of the World Cup.

And this upcoming showdown in Toronto has everything you want in a tournament if you are a fan of the game.

To begin with, it's a super-sized best-on-best for 2016, since the top six countries will be joined by a North American YoungStars squad and a Trans-Europe Express team to spice things up. So instead of watching Japan or Italy fall over while they try to pick up their sticks in Olympic play, we could get Connor McDavid centering Johnny Gaudreau and Nathan MacKinnon, or Zdeno Chara running a power play

alongside Roman Josi with Mats Zuccarello waiting to pounce from the slot.

The NHL is the best league on the planet, and only the World Cup format ensures the highest percentage of elite players going head-to-head. Is it going to be a little weird having Slovaks, Danes and Swiss on the same squad? Slovenia's Anze Kopitar acknowledged it might take a minute to get sorted, but he's also pumped because he gets to play in the tournament. "Once you step on the ice, we're all professionals and we all want to win," Kopitar said. "It doesn't matter who you're playing with or who you're playing against."

For those who play for traditional hockey powers such as Canada, Russia

and the U.S., the World Cup is far from a consolation prize. It's a new (OK, rebooted) chance to put on a beloved national sweater and go to war on the ice. "I hope we get as many opportunities as we can to represent our country," said American Ryan McDonagh of the New York Rangers. "You only get to play this game for so long. To have that competitive spirit against other countries, that's stuff you dream of as a kid."

And it's not like generations have grown up dreaming of Olympic gold. The tourney has only included NHLers since 1998. The World Cup started in 1996 while its forebearer, the Canada Cup, goes back to 1976.

But the best thing about the World Cup? It doesn't throw a ratchet into the NHL season. While the Olympics drag our best players halfway around the world for a couple weeks in the middle of the NHL campaign (you don't see the NBA dealing with such shenanigans), the World Cup will give us awesome hockey in September, when nothing else is going on.

From a spectator's point of view, this is excellent. Even for the players this is an upgrade. Injuries are going to happen no matter when a tourney is on, so that's not a consideration. But getting to train and then play with the best hockey talents in the world on the cusp of the regular season means NHLers can hit the ground running. There's even the potential for limiting injuries, as players will be 100 percent prepared for the World Cup, so conditioning ailments such as groin strains are less likely than usual, when players ease their way into training camp.

For hockey players, the hard road is the best path to glory. There will be no easy outs at the World Cup, and even making it to the playoff round will be tricky. From there, we're guaranteed some sort of classic showdown. And the winner can raise the trophy with a clear conscience. — **RYAN KENNEDY**





# THE WINTER OLYMPICS

*It puts the game on the biggest stage and gets the most viewers. You can't put a price on that*

**IN ANY SPORT THESE** days, it's all about the eyeballs. Whether you're talking about high definition TV, Amazon Fire TV, Fire TV stick, Apple TV or any of the other multiple variations on the boob tube, nothing makes a statement like having people's retinas glued to your product.

And there is nothing that achieves that objective more effectively than having the best players in the world playing against one another in the Olympics. It is indisputable, in fact, that the five-ring circus has drawn the largest audiences in the history of the sport in Canada and the United States. The Canada/World Cup, World Championship, Stanley Cup final and World Junior Championship pale so much in comparison that none of them even registers.

So why are NHL owners so dead-set opposed to their players participating in the biggest showcase in the world? Well, it has something to do with the risk their players run of being injured playing for free while the owners are still stroking the checks (see Tavares, John). Much of it has to do with the fact the NHL has little control over the proceedings and gets none of the profits, but that's the price you pay for putting your athletes on the biggest stage where the spotlight shines the brightest.

For example, do you have any idea what hockey game has attracted the most American viewers ever? Well, it's the final at the 1980 Olympics, which featured the plucky American college kids beating Finland for gold on the heels of knocking off the Soviets – one of the greatest teams the game has ever known. The game averaged 32.8 million viewers, nearly double the number for the 2010 gold medal game between Canada and the U.S. in Vancouver 30 years later. In Canada, the final at the 2010 Olympics attracted an average of 16.6 million viewers, which accounted for almost half the country. The game topped out at 26.5 million, which represents roughly 80 percent of Canada.

Four years later, the T.J. Oshie shootout game against Russia attracted 4.1 million viewers on NBCSN, which set a record for a live stream of a hockey game, until a

couple days later when 4.6 million watched the U.S.'s semifinal loss to Canada. More importantly, there were more than 2.1 million unique users on "TV Everywhere," an on-demand live streaming service. That total represented the highest number ever to that point, including the Super Bowl.

When Oshie thrilled the hockey world by scoring four goals on six shootout attempts against Russia in Sochi, he got a shoutout from President Barack Obama and gained 129,000 Twitter followers overnight. Oshie was the toast of the games, and his performance was singled out as one of the most memorable hockey moments in his country's history. None of that happens if not for the Olympics.

The NHL has always trumpeted its claim hockey fans are among the most tech savvy, best educated and most financially well off of any who follow the four major sports in North America. When you have that many people wanting your product on that many platforms, it makes sense to keep putting them on the world's biggest stage, no?

But that's not the only reason why the Olympics are the best hockey tournament. From the Miracle on Ice to the Peter Forsberg stamp goal to the 2010 gold medal game that is regarded as one of the best ever played, the Olympics have the ability to supply moments of drama more compelling than any other.

If not for the Olympics, the NHL would be devoid of European talent. That might please the xenophobic among us, but it would have also robbed the NHL of some of the most skilled players ever. If not for the Olympics, there would have been little motivation for the Russians to use hockey and Olympic glory as a testament to their supremacy. And there would have been little motivation for countries such as Sweden, Finland and the Czech Republic to follow suit.

The Olympics remains the only unsullied best-on-best hockey tournament in the world. It gives us moments like the ones provided by Anze Kopitar and Slovenia, one where every country is put on equal footing instead of being marginalized into a hodge-podge of players who have no common purpose, as with two of the teams in the World Cup of Hockey. It provides the world with a glimpse of the greatest game on the planet. And it needs to stay. — **KEN CAMPBELL**



PETR  
MRAZEK**SECOND-BEST LEAGUE**

# THE AHL

*People close to the game widely prefer the NHL's feeder circuit to the rickety league setup across the Atlantic*

**T**HE NHL IS UNQUESTIONABLY the best hockey league in the world, and since 88 percent of its players come from the AHL, it's obvious which circuit comes in second. I conducted a straw poll of player agents on the topic, and the AHL was the definitive answer, "no question."

Even though the AHL is more of a development league than Russia's top rung of hockey, it is still viewed by agents as having better competition and quality of hockey than the KHL. And that's important, because agents can get bigger paydays for their clients in Russia. But they also know that for their charges to get NHL jobs on a full-time basis, the players must be prepared for the rigors of the elite ranks, and that's where the AHL comes in.

examples, as are veterans Niklas Kronwall, Justin Abdelkader and Jonathan Ericsson (plus goalies Jimmy Howard and Petr Mrazek).

Other franchises are having their AHL epiphanies, too. The Toronto Maple Leafs for example, brought in a raft of veterans during training camp to give their youngsters a deliberate uphill battle. The result was having top-end recruits such as William Nylander, Kasperii Kapanen, Connor Brown and Zach Hyman starting the year with the AHL's Marlies, playing big minutes for a squad that will likely be more exciting to watch than the NHL club itself. And that's all good, because those youngsters will get great reps against physically strong competition in NHL-type situations.

After all, when the NHL is considering new rule changes, the league has often gone to the AHL to test out the wrinkles first. If anything, some of those developing players are getting a jumpstart on NHLers by playing in the minors in some situations.

The AHL doesn't just build up players, however. Coaching is also a strong suit of the circuit, which goes hand in hand with developing great on-ice talent. Of the 30 current NHL coaches, only nine didn't spend at least one season behind an AHL bench, and Dave Tippett is a bit of an asterisk, since his IHL Houston Aeros eventually joined the AHL. On the other hand, the KHL is where coaches go for a last chance (Mike Keenan, for example).

Really, the only advantage the KHL has over the AHL is in salaries, but even then, players aren't guaranteed to actually receive all their money over in the Russian circuit. That was another gripe from agents about the KHL, and it doesn't seem like the instability is going to change much anymore.

Even in travel, the AHL wins out. Sure, there are bus trips, but the expansion of the footprint over the years also means plane travel to big, fun cities such as San Diego, Austin, Toronto and Chicago. Meanwhile, the KHL has ignored military history (never cross Russia in the winter) by geographically stretching to absurd lengths. Salavat Yulaev Ufa and Admiral Vladivostok for example, are in the same division but separated by a 14-hour plane ride. How is that good for players in any way?

For players who want to be the best in their journey to the NHL, the AHL is the clear-cut route to go. If you want to chase money and hassles, by all means head to the KHL. — **RYAN KENNEDY**



# THE KHL

*Kontinental League comes out on top in many categories: experience, star power, production, even head-to-head*

**A**T THE 2013 SPENGLER CUP, the KHL's CSKA Moscow downed the AHL's Rochester Americans 4-3 in a round-robin game. CSKA went on to make the final, while the Americans dropped every single game they played by a combined score of 15-6.

On a league-specific scale, the difference between Moscow and Rochester wasn't much. Both had win percentages bordering on 60 percent in their respective leagues, finished in a playoff positions and were steady on offense and defense. But when it came to a head-to-head, the KHL came out on top. And that's the thing: play that 2013 contest 10 times and the result won't change. The KHL is the world's second-best league, and there's really no question.

From a pure talent standpoint, only the NHL beats what the KHL can offer. Bona fide superstar Ilya Kovalchuk is the biggest name in the KHL, but the league also plays host to a number of former NHLers, including Alexander Radulov, Nigel Dawes, Matt Gilroy and Cam Barker. While it's not top-tier NHL talent, all four are players whose game would be wasted in the AHL. It's for that very reason players head to the KHL instead of toiling in North America's minor league system.

Putting together an all-star team of KHLers since the league's inaugural season in 2008 shows how immensely talented some of these players are. Of course, Kovalchuk and Radulov would be on the list, but so would Jaromir Jagr, Alexei Yashin, Oleg Saprykin,



ILYA KOVALCHUK & KONSTANTIN KORNEEV

the game has benefitted in a big way. In the AHL, teams must sometimes play the way the big club wishes, teaching system over skill. Not so in the KHL, where each team plays to its strengths and produces a style to fit the talent on its roster. That makes for more exciting hockey and a league-wide product that isn't a copy of the league above it with less-talented players.

That's also true of team improvement. In the KHL, one off-season can change a team's fate, whereas AHL teams are at the behest of their NHL affiliates. Fans of struggling AHL clubs have to rely on the NHL team to stock the farm. Not so in the KHL, where GMs can go out and improve with creativity, scouting and financial resources.

Even the league's import limit doesn't prove to be a major hindrance when it comes to icing top-level teams, especially because much of the creative play is coming from the Russian players. In the AHL, however, the veteran limit only allows for a maximum of six players with 260-plus pro games to dress on one roster. That means a number of talented vets are out of jobs in the NHL's minor league. But the AHL's loss is the KHL's gain.

Admittedly, the public perception of the league is what hurts the KHL. The threat of teams folding, players not receiving payment and security risks have clouded the way people react to the league. But the KHL has faced the same issues as the AHL without the benefit of help from another, more powerful league to feed it talent and money. The financial stability of some of the KHL's teams has been called into question, but that's no different from the AHL, which has seen nearly a dozen teams fold or relocate since 2008.

When it comes to making the product accessible, the KHL is miles ahead of the AHL, too. The AHL's production values are often subpar, with live feeds looking closer to something produced in the early days of the internet than today's high-definition broadcast world. The KHL offers English highlight shows on YouTube for North American fans trying to access the league. Its website also comes in English and Russian. That matters, and the KHL's efforts in packaging a product that

looks like a professional league has made a difference for anyone trying to keep up.

The AHL may be able to boast it has some future stars among its ranks, but the KHL could trot out a number of teams that could compete in the NHL today. And, most of all, that's what makes the KHL the second-best league in the world. It isn't striving to be the second-best. The KHL is shooting for No. 1. — **JARED CLINTON**



NIGEL DAWES OF BARYS ASTANA

Maxim Afinogenov, Jiri Hudler, Sergei Fedorov, Wojtek Wolski and Sergei Kostitsyn. Compare that to an AHL all-star roster and the debate over which league produces the better on-ice product is over.

The KHL allows for creative hockey to flourish, and

**BEST COACH**JOEL  
**QUENNEVILLE**

*Cups are all that count, and no coach in the NHL rivals the Hawks' bench boss when it comes to hockey's ultimate prize*



**DURING AN INTERVIEW EARLY** in his career, Alexander Ovechkin came up with this gem: "Cups is Cups." We use it around the office all the time.

If you're looking for the hands-down best coach in the NHL, just follow that mantra. Of the 30 coaches, eight of them have won Stanley Cups. Only one of them has won three. And that would be Joel Quenneville.

Stanley Cups are what we use to measure players' legacies, so it should go the same for coaches. After all, a coach often has as big an impact on a team's ability to win a Cup as the star players do. In that respect, you have to give Quenneville his due, and then some. (If Cup rings aren't enough evidence, Quenneville is third all-time behind Scotty Bowman and the late Al Arbour in regular season and playoff wins.)

Yes, he has at times had a murderer's row of star players at his disposal, led by franchise players Jonathan Toews and Patrick Kane. But if it were that easy to manage star players, why wouldn't everyone be able to do it? It's not as easy as you might think. And Quenneville has done it for the better part of the past decade, juggling his lineup to respond to the salary cap crunch. He has kept his team at or near the top of the league despite a revolving door of players that has seen the Blackhawks have to deal many top players over the years, including Andrew Ladd, Dustin Byfuglien and, most recently, Brandon Saad.

And Quenneville does it by having a unique feel for his players. He has an uncanny knowledge of how they're going to respond in almost any situation. His use of rookie Teuvo Teravainen last year in the playoffs was brilliant. He is the league's top bench coach, with an ability to adjust his lines period-by-period, game-by-game, even when the pace is frenetic.

Unlike the coach on the other side of the debate, Quenneville hasn't led his native country to two Olympic gold medals. But he's also never been given the chance to lead the world's top hockey country with the best players and most resources into battle. And if one Stanley Cup in 10 years is worth a \$50-million contract for Mike Babcock over eight years, what's three Cups in six seasons worth?

We'll likely find out before Quenneville's deal expires after 2016-17. There's a good chance the Blackhawks will rip up his contract before Quenneville has an opportunity to hit the open market. It will be huge, because the Blackhawks know they have the best coach in the NHL. — **KEN CAMPBELL**

MIKE  
**BABCOCK**

*No coach handles pressure like 'Babs' and delivers under it on the world stage*

**WITH APOLOGIES TO THE** upcoming World Cup of Hockey, the crown jewel of international hockey remains the Olympics. There is more focus on hockey during the Winter Games than at any other time. So when it came time to choose his coach for the past two Olympics, in 2010 at the Vancouver Games and in 2014 in Sochi, Team Canada's executive director, Steve Zerman, went with Mike Babcock.

There were plenty of qualified candidates, including Joel Quenneville. But Babcock not only got the job, his team won gold medals at both events.

This isn't a knock on Quenneville. The guy is a winner, and he's destined for the Hall of Fame. But Babcock is a winner, too. He has coached teams to three Stanley Cup finals, winning once in 2007-08 with the Detroit Red Wings. And in his other two appearances, his teams came up just one game short. In 2002-03, Babcock led the underdog Anaheim Ducks all the way to the final, losing in Game 7 to the New Jersey Devils, and in 2008-09 his Red Wings lost to the Pittsburgh Penguins in their quest for consecutive Cups.

Nice resume, to be sure.

But the real feathers in Babcock's cap are his successes at the 2010 and 2014 Winter Olympics, when he guided Canada's men's team to back-to-back gold medals. That's right, when the best of the best gathered for a little hockey shindig, Babcock was put in charge of the team with the most to lose. The favorites.

The steely-eyed Babcock uses a simple game plan: discipline, preparation and skill. Oh, and puck possession. He expects his players to pay a price for success on and off the ice.

There are times when it looks as though Quenneville is about to have a meltdown behind the bench. He is, um, jittery, to say the least. In the heat of battle, Babcock remains calm, cool and collected.

That, for me, is what separates the two. Splitting hairs? Yes. But when you are choosing between two greats, sometimes that's all it takes.

That and the Olympics thing. — **MIKE BROPHY**



# THE CWHL

*Trailblazer of women's hockey has experience rookie circuit doesn't*

**R**OOKIES BRING UNBRIDLED ENERGY and instigate oft-needed changes and challenges to our preconceived notions of sport. But in the long run, championships are won with a wealth of veterans on the ice and in the front office. That's why the CWHL is still the premier women's hockey league.

There is no doubt the NWHL is the best league in terms of salary paid to its players. The CWHL doesn't offer any, and it's a welcome challenge to follow suit. Fran Rider, the first inductee into the International Ice Hockey Federation Hall of Fame for effort and achievement in the development of hockey for women and girls, said at the 2015 CWHL Awards Gala that a victory for one women's sport is a victory for all women's sports. It's even sweeter when that victory happens to be in the exact same sport.

The CWHL has risen to, met and surpassed challenges since 2007, including the Western Women's League. Just as the high-flying upstart WHA eventually saw teams merge into the NHL, the same happened in the women's game when the WWHL and CWHL joined forces in 2011. And before that there was the



NATALIE SPOONER  
& JULIE CHU

original National Women's Hockey League. It's the CWHL that still stands.

It's taken 125 years after the first known photo of women playing hockey to have a league that pays players more than beer money. That wouldn't be possible without the proven record and legwork of the CWHL, growing in attendance and sponsorship since its inception eight seasons ago.

The league's board of directors is loaded with experience in all facets of hockey and marketing, from Arlene Dickinson and Graeme Roustan to Brenda Address, Cassie Campbell-Pascall, Brian Burke and Cheryl Pounder.

In some ways, the new kid on the block has done the CWHL a favor. It proves that it is possible. And let's face it, if it's possible in the U.S., it can't be impossible in Canada. — **MONIKA MORAVAN**



DANI RYLAN

# THE NWHL

*Upstart circuit can already claim to be the No. 1 league in women's hockey*

**Y**ES, THE NWHL IS only in its inaugural season. And, yes, no one knows about the potential longevity of the league, but it's impossible not to get swept up in the excitement surrounding what could be the future of women's hockey. When it comes to putting together the best women's league in the world, NWHL commissioner Dani Rylan has had the Midas touch so far.

From the moment the NWHL became a full-fledged idea, it has staked its claim as the best women's circuit. The league said it would pay its players, provide them with gear and give back to help grow the women's game — promises it has already made good on.

Rylan and company far exceeded expectations in their first off-season. There was something symbolic about the NWHL's first free-agent signing, too. When Janine Weber signed with Rylan's New York Riveters, she left behind the CWHL — where she had just ended the season by scoring the Clarkson Cup-winning goal in overtime — and joined the upstart league. There hasn't been a summer of women's hockey in recent memory when player signings were as exciting as the NWHL made them.

In the final weeks of the summer, the NWHL solidified its claim as the premier women's league with the signings of superstars Hilary Knight, Brianna Decker, Kelli Stack and Megan Bozek. But they didn't stop at luring only North American products, as international stars such as Japan's Nana Fujimoto and Russia's Yekaterina Smolentseva also inked deals in the burgeoning league.

Most of all, what makes the NWHL the better league is the on-ice play. Landing Knight and Decker from the CWHL is akin to the likes of Sidney Crosby and Steven Stamkos leaving the NHL for the KHL. That speaks volumes about what to expect from the NWHL and the confidence the players have in it being the most competitive league.

In all off-ice aspects, the nod for better league goes to the NWHL. And if it were a battle of best-against-best, the squad from the NWHL would be celebrating after the final whistle. — **JARED CLINTON**

**BEST EXPANSION BET**

# LAS VEGAS

*NHL is eager to be the first pro sports league at the money trough in Sin City. It has virtually willed it in place*

**IF YOU WERE FORCED** to choose just one NHL expansion site between Las Vegas and Quebec City, you'd only need Willie Sutton's simple logic to aid your choice. A reporter once asked Sutton, one of America's more colorful 20th-century bad guys, why he robbed banks. "Because," Sutton plainly replied, "that's where the money is."

Well, Vegas is where the people are – and, therefore, where the money is.

It's the largest North American metropolitan area – over two million people – without a pro sports franchise. And boosters of Vegas' NHL bid firmly believe that if the NHL expands there before another sport drops a franchise in Nevada, hockey could capture the region's sporting imagination, making it a runaway success. By comparison, less than 800,000 live in Quebec City's charming metropolitan area.

Yes, Quebec is already hockey country. More than 100 years ago, it was home to high-level hockey while Las Vegas was just being incorporated as a city. But finance trumps romance in pro sports, and if the NHL is looking to grow revenues in the 21st century, the potential in Vegas would dwarf that of *La Vieille Capitale*.

That's obviously the way Bruins owner Jeremy Jacobs sees it. He's also the influential chairman of the league's board of governors and leads the owners' executive committee. "Quebec has a great hockey interest," Jacobs said on the eve of the new season, "(but) it's an extraordinarily small market."

There's mounting evidence Vegas is ready to welcome hockey with open arms and wallets. The highly publicized season-ticket drive initiated by prospective franchise owner William Foley exceeded 14,000 deposits from locals, impressing many league officials, including commissioner Gary Bettman.

A new Vegas team would play in the MGM-AEG Las Vegas Arena, set to open in April 2016, and will seat roughly 17,500 for hockey. It has been designed and built according to NHL specifications.

In the pre-season, the Los Angeles Kings once again sold out the 12,000-seat MGM Grand Garden for their yearly Frozen Fury exhibition game, something they've done annually since 1998 (and L.A. reportedly will play the inaugural NHL game in the new arena next pre-season).

Adding to Vegas' superiority is its status as one of the top-three tourist and convention destinations in the U.S., along with Orlando and Chicago, now drawing a mindboggling 40 million annually. Vegas visitors come primarily for the city's varied forms of entertainment, and what's more entertaining than an NHL game?

Quebec City is also a marvellous place to travel, for very different reasons. It's justifiably considered one of Canada's most beautiful cities, and around five million visit each year. As wonderful as Quebec may be, however, when it comes to sheer numbers, it's no contest.

Plus, Las Vegas' location in the southwestern U.S. would allow the NHL to nearly balance the number of teams in the two conferences. Adding Quebec instead would give the East three more teams than the West – and after the protracted squabble that finally brought Detroit and Columbus into the East two years ago, those teams aren't switching back.

Las Vegas also would help fill out the league's U.S. national TV footprint, part of Bettman's vision of the NHL for 20 years. Although it's the 40th-ranked TV market, Nevada has viewers who are already fans of the product. In recent years, Vegas has hovered around the top 10 of all U.S. cities for watching NHL games on NBC and NBCSN and near or at the top among cities without NHL teams. Additionally, the Kings games have been available to Vegas viewers for years.

None of this is to say a return of the NHL to Quebec – whose citizens are surely hungrier for NHL hockey than those in Las Vegas or any other market in the U.S. – wouldn't be a terrific story. But if only one team could be added, you'd have to put your money on Las Vegas. – **STU HACKEL**



# QUEBEC CITY

*Just like the Jets, Quebec City has everything in place to make a small-market team into a big-time success*

**D**EEP-POCKETED OWNERSHIP? CHECK. New arena? Check. System certainty of a salary cap? Check.

These are the three basic conditions for a successful addition of an NHL franchise to Canada, and all of them apply to Quebec City's bona fide application before the league's board of governors.

They're also the proven formula for what happened in 2011 in Winnipeg, where the Jets have been a runaway hit since the NHL took something of a leap of faith four-plus years ago.

You don't hear much from those know-it-all naysayers and it'll-never-work bloggers anymore, do you? Based on what occurred in 2011 and the conditions in place again, the NHL has only one real option when it's deciding which city is most worthy of expansion.

The similarities are many between Winnipeg and Quebec City. In addition to the foundation of the three necessities, cited so often by league commissioner Gary Bettman himself, there's also that matter of having an opportunity to right a historical wrong.

Bettman has often made this reference, too, during and since the 2011 franchise return to Winnipeg. Under better conditions of the present, the correction of matters of 1996, when the Jets fled for Phoenix, has played well to audiences everywhere.

So shall it be in Quebec City, where the Nordiques decamped in 1995 for Denver under the same clouds: ownership limitations, a decaying building and unchecked and skyrocketing salaries.

Now there's a media conglomerate (Quebecor) owned by a man (Pierre-Karl Peledeau) that's ready to take on an NHL franchise. It has already helped pave the way for the new Centre Videotron, which is now open.



And a collective bargaining agreement with a salary cap has been in place since 2005. So while salaries do increase, there's a system that keeps it real, one that ties salaries to ever-increasing league revenues, one that also includes revenue sharing for smaller markets like Winnipeg and Quebec City, plus currency protection for the fluctuations of the Canadian dollar.

The positives don't end there. Quebec City, like Winnipeg, is not what it was in the mid-'90s. The Quebec capital has seen change for the better, starting with an economy that is now more diversified and includes a burgeoning technology sector. Unemployment, near 14 percent in 1995, is now near four percent. If that's not the country's lowest for a major metro area, then it's awfully close to it.

The city's population is about 540,000 (2014 estimate), but the metro area comes out near 800,000, not far off that of Winnipeg. What most fail to realize when blindly maintaining that those figures make it too small to support a major league franchise is that the areas we're examining include a concentrated community of actual hockey fans who spend money on and place a priority on hockey.

Centre Videotron is larger than Winnipeg's MTS Centre, about 18,400 seats, which includes loge seating and 80 or so suites. In Winnipeg, inventory of anything – seats, suites, sponsorships – has been pretty much sold out since Day 1, propelling the Jets immediately to near the middle of the revenue pack. This, please recall, from the league's smallest market as of today.

Then there's the X-factor.

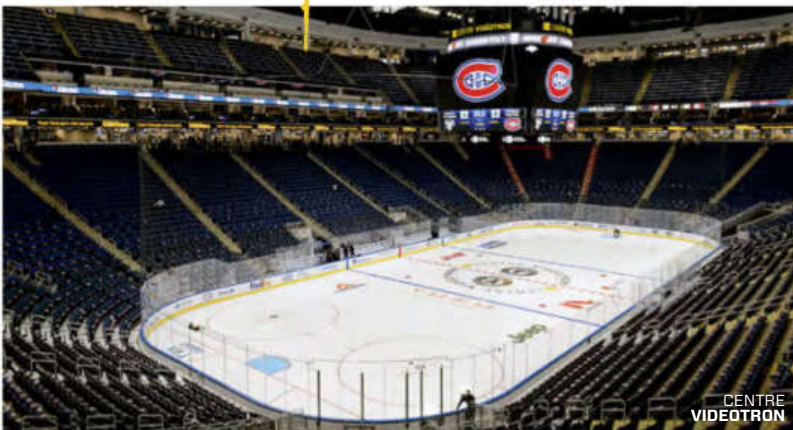
In Winnipeg during the 15-year dark period, it was difficult to know how deeply and precisely the city's good hockey fans missed their NHL team. Through the years, squeaky wheels always got some grease (in the form of headlines), but when the time came for the credit cards to come out, the answer was quantified loudly and clearly.

The Jets needed only four days to sell out available season tickets. Seats went on sale to the public only on the fourth day, and the story was over in 17 minutes. And that sellout time was an eternity, because the computers handling the transactions couldn't come close to keeping up. That's a lot of X-factor, and there would appear to be plenty in Quebec.

Even though the old Nordiques actually went away more quietly in an air of resignation 20 years ago, the proposition for a resurrection, sparked by improving conditions like a helpful CBA, a well-heeled owner and a new building, and probably the Winnipeg story as well, have reignited the passion.

The X-factor conversation should also include 2010's *La Marche Bleue* on the Plains of Abraham, when an unexpected 65,000 or more showed up to rally for the cause for Quebec City. Since then, the city has been abuzz with the prospect.

So go ahead, rub your lucky casino chips all you want, be impressed with a season-ticket drive that costs next to nothing, feel free to oooh and aaah at Sin City's bright lights, there is only one clear choice to top the expansion list. And it's not the home of Elvis and hockey-fan impersonators. – **TIM CAMPBELL**





# BAIT & SWITCH

For the franchise's first two seasons, San Jose was shark meat for the rest of the league. That all turned in Year 3, and the Sharks haven't looked back since as they celebrate their 25th anniversary **With Mike Brophy**



**I**N 1991-92, THE SAN JOSE SHARKS JOINED the NHL as the league's 22nd franchise. Although the team struggled on the ice during its first two seasons, it made quite a splash off the ice in terms of marketing and merchandising.

The team was the hobbyhorse of brothers Gordon and George Gund III, who were awarded a franchise to be located in the Bay Area on the condition they sold their current team at the time, the Minnesota North Stars,

IRBEE: DK PHOTO





### MIXED FEELINGS

Kingston feels like he left the NHL with unfinished business. He was let go as coach after just two seasons.

to Norm Green at a reduced price. In their inaugural season, the Sharks finished last with 17 wins and 39 points. Their sophomore season was even worse. They won just 11 games, though they had company in the basement alongside the expansion Ottawa Senators, whom they tied with 24 points.

In Season 3, however, the Sharks shocked the hockey world by eliminating the top-seeded Red Wings, who'd finished 18 points ahead of them, in the first round of the playoffs. San Jose set a league record with a 58-point improvement in the regular season and proved it was no fluke by eliminating Detroit and then taking the Toronto Maple Leafs to seven games in the playoffs.

This is the story of the early years of the Sharks, who are celebrating their 25th anniversary in 2015-16.

**GEORGE KINGSTON, COACH:** I would tell the players that effort, attitude and work ethic is everything. I talked a lot about being successful and what made successful people. The focus was simply on the people and bringing out their best while being able to park their frustration and distraction and being able to think of nothing other than living in the moment and giving your best and getting better every day.

**DOUG WILSON, D:** We had a group of players who understood that, yes, we had to compete even though we didn't have much talent, but also we had to interact with our fans.

**BRIAN LAWTON, C:** What really stands out is the great collection of really good people we had. Guys like Doug Wilson, Kelly Kisio, Brian Mullen, Bob McGill – just a really strong group of character players. In starting a franchise, that is a key component to laying a solid foundation.

**BOB MCGILL, D:** I was excited, but I wasn't excited at the same time. The three previous years my former team, the Chicago Blackhawks, were in the conference final twice and won the Presidents' Trophy in 1991. The flip side is it was a brand new team and I was a veteran. It was probably the only time in my entire career I felt secure going to training camp that I'd be on the team. I ended up being voted an alternate captain, and I was able to provide some leadership to a group that was going to go through a tough expansion season.

**WILSON:** There was a game in Pittsburgh that we lost 10-2 (Dec. 17, 1991) and our goalie, Jarmo Myllys, allowed a goal from center ice that defied gravity. How it stayed in the air I'll never know. It was a dump in and he missed it three times. He reached out with his glove and whiffed on it. He reached back and tried to grab it but missed it. Then he threw his body at it as the puck went into the net to make it 10-2. He slammed his stick over the crossbar and shattered it. I skated past him and said, "Jarmo, there's no reason to get that mad because honestly, you're not that good."

### SHARK BITTEN FOR LIFE

Now Sharks GM, Wilson has bled teal since finishing his playing career in San Jose in 1993.

*The Sharks played their first two seasons at the Cow Palace near San Francisco, which opened in 1941. It was a quirky building constructed as a livestock pavilion.*

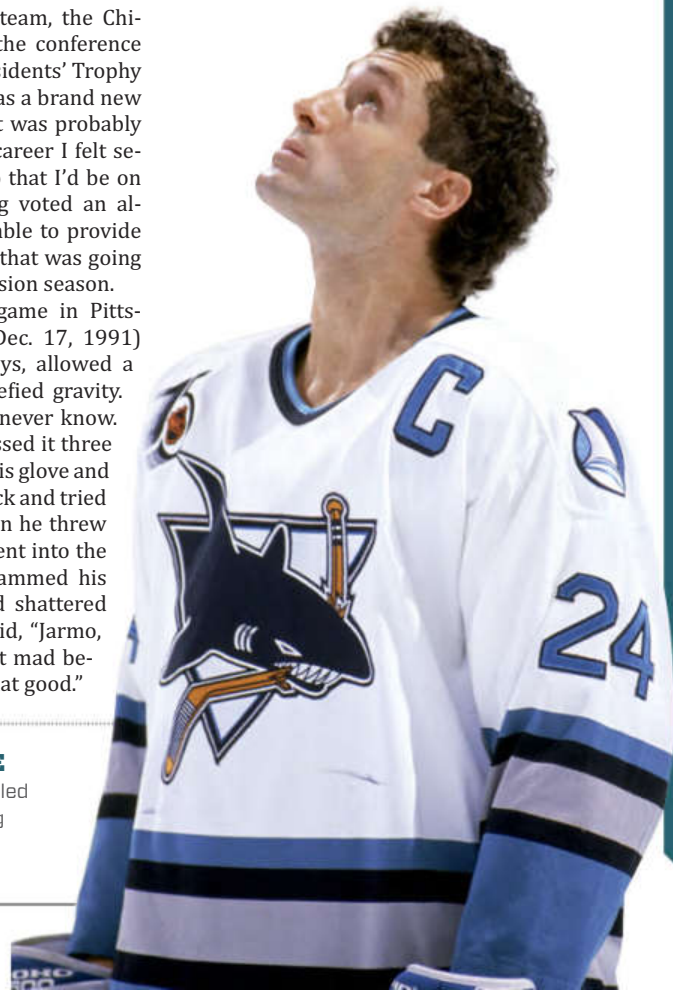
**WILSON:** It is an appropriate name. The rodeo would be in there, so it would have a unique odor on occasion. It was a small rink, but it was loud and passionate.

**MCGILL:** You had fans in San Francisco who hadn't had hockey there for a long time, and they were so enthusiastic. We didn't win many games, but the fans got behind us and were fantastic.

**LAWTON:** It was in a rough neighborhood. I think the first time I went there they were having a gun show in the building. It was old, but it had a lot of character.

*Kingston was beloved by most of his players in the two years he coached the Sharks. He was intelligent, and had a reputation for being a teacher. He took the job with high hopes, but things didn't go as he planned. Kingston left town with a 28-129-7 record and a mixed bag of memories.*

**KINGSTON:** My memories are bitter sweet, though mostly sweet. The bot-



tom line is I left the NHL with unfinished business because of what I had hoped to accomplish – and that was working with (GM) Jack Ferreira for a three- to five-year period. We started out thinking we were going to be competitive in Years 3, 4 and 5.

**LAWTON:** George was a great guy. All he ever did was yell, “Shoot!” It was a big joke with the players. You would get the puck breaking out of your own zone and George would be yelling, “Shooooooooo! Shooooooooo!” He was such a good and gracious man, but I just wanted to shout back, “Shut the f--- up! I can’t shoot because I’m still 170 feet from the other team’s net.” He even had the players over to his house. I played in the league for eight years, and nobody was doing that stuff. Do you think Darryl Sutter is having anybody over to his house on an off day? Not a chance. George was a kind man with a big heart.

**MCGILL:** He was a positive guy. He never swore once. He never got mad and snapped on people. I had just played for the biggest f---ing a--hole in the world in Mike Keenan for three years in Chicago where it was all about winning.

*If the Sharks weren’t successful on the ice in the first two years, they were trendsetters in marketing – from getting fans involved with the naming of the team to their unusual jersey color scheme to interacting with the fans.*

*After Art Savage was hired as the team’s president, the organization hired Matt Levine as the director of marketing. Levine had a long history of working with the team’s owners and quickly went about putting the organization on the sports map. He was aggressive and successful in getting national and international coverage for a team in its initial season. He helped design the jersey and logo and even convinced Gordie Howe to skate on the ice with Gund when the team unveiled its uniform.*

**MATT LEVINE, MARKETING:** Coming into the Bay Area where there were two established NFL teams, two established MLB teams and an established NBA team, we knew we had to get credibility quickly. At the Cow Palace, we had an opening week, not an opening night. We went out and hired the people who produced the Pink Floyd concerts. We created an opening night with animated lasers where an opposing player would start skating around the ice and he gets chased by a Sharks player who morphs into a shark and eats him.

When we initially introduced the logo and uniforms, I personally contacted Gordie Howe and said, “You can really honor us



## GIANT KILLERS

Ray Whitney and the eighth-seeded Sharks were massive underdogs to the Red Wings in the 1994 playoffs.

“HE CAME INTO OUR OFFICE AND SAID, ‘YOU MIGHT WANT TO LOOK AT THIS.’ WE HAD DETROIT’S GAME PLAN

– Kevin Constantine

by coming to a press conference and skating onto the ice rink with our owner Gordon Gund.”

I mean, this was the Babe Ruth of hockey. We had a press conference and erected stands on the ice. We had 300 fans sitting in the stands, and the only way they could get invited was to come up with a name for our name-the-team sweepstakes. Then we had Gordie and Gordon skating onto the ice.

Internally we generated some 200 team nicknames and narrowed it down to 10, which included Blades and Sharks. Blades

came in at No. 1 and Sharks was No. 2. Our research eliminated Blades because of the gang-related connotations.

I contacted five companies to find out what shade of blue had legs on it and discovered there are 20 shades of teal. I wanted a three-dimensional logo, something that is coming out of the jersey. That’s why the shark biting the stick was truncated to give it the image of bursting out of the triangle. Finally, we had the name Sharks done in a serrated typeface. It was the word *Sharks* looking like teeth in the shark.

*The Sharks enjoyed a dramatic turnaround in 1993-94. Kevin Constantine, just 34 years old at the time, was hired as coach, and the team acquired a pair of high-flying Russians, Igor Larionov and Sergei Makarov. Considering San Jose started the season 0-8-1, it was a remarkable year.*

**KEVIN CONSTANTINE, COACH:** Two things happened: 1) we were losing at the start, and 2) the Russians didn’t want to play the way I wanted the team to play. In fact, they refused to play that way. I’d coach a certain way, and the team would practise a certain way, and then Larionov and Makarov would go out and do their own thing.

It was out of failure that I told my assistant coach, Wayne Thomas, that we’d take the five players (Makarov, Larionov, Johan Garpenlov, Sandis Ozolinsh and Jeff Norton) that weren’t doing anything I’m telling them and play them together. I gave them to Wayne and said the only thing I’m going to do is if they are minus in a game, they’re



going to hear from me. By the end of the year I thought they were the most dynamic group of five in the NHL. They were hard to stop and so much fun to watch.

**BOB ERREY, LW:** They were personable guys and leaders. They circled the puck, they brought it back, they rotated. There was a lot of circular motion and regrouping. I don't know why coaches don't do that now. Why should Sidney Crosby play the same way as Craig Adams? I have never understood why one system has to be implemented for the entire team. It befuddles me.

**JAMIE BAKER, C:** Larionov is the best player I ever played with. I played with Joe Sakic, Guy Lafleur, Mats Sundin, Owen Nolan, Doug Gilmour and Kirk Muller, but Larionov was the best. He was so selfless and played such a puck possession game that he wasn't worried about putting up 150 points. He could have put up more points, but he was always looking for the right play, and he didn't want to turn the puck over.

*Although it was a total team effort in 1993-94, one player stood above the rest: goaltender Arturs Irbe. The little Latvian established an NHL record for most minutes played in a season at 4,412.*

**CONSTANTINE:** We didn't want to wear him out, so I gave him a game off. After practice, in protest of me not playing him, he chased the Zamboni around the ice doing ups-and-downs for the entire 15 min-



## FREE REIN

Larionov and his linemates were allowed to play how they wanted, as long as they weren't minuses.

utes. It was his way of saying, "You guys think I'm tired, but I am not. Look at me go."

**ERREY:** You can't talk about that season without mentioning Arturs Irbe. He was a character, but he made huge save after huge save. He was such a competitor. He even sewed his own equipment on the airplane. He had this old equipment, and he'd get a big needle and thread out and do his own maintenance.

that he gave a 16-point speech. I asked him why 16 points, and he said, "That's how many games you have to win in the playoffs to win the Stanley Cup, so I want to tell them 16 things we have to do to have any prayer at all." That was really powerful, because it came from a teammate and not a coach.

**BAKER:** We had the fifth-best record in the second half. We were an eighth seed, but we were playing much better than that.

**CONSTANTINE:** We played Detroit with not too many games remaining in the regular season, and I believe it had already been established the Red Wings were going to play us in the playoffs. The Detroit staff went to the front desk at their hotel in San Jose

**IRBE WAS A CHARACTER, BUT HE MADE HUGE SAVE AFTER HUGE SAVE. HE WAS SUCH A COMPETITOR** – Bob Errey

*San Jose vs. Detroit in the first round of playoffs was viewed as David vs. Goliath, but not by the Sharks players, especially Jamie Baker, who scored the series-winning goal, and Bob Errey, who was named captain prior to the season. Errey had helped the Pittsburgh Penguins in 1990-91 and 1991-92, and Constantine had no trouble leaning on the veteran for help.*

**CONSTANTINE:** When we knew we were in the playoffs, I asked Errey if he would address the team, and he took it so seriously

and asked the receptionist to make a copy of a 10-page document. She looked at what she was copying, and it was their game plan against us. She was dating a guy on our team, so she made an extra copy. The next day, the player came in our office and plopped it on our desk and said, "You guys might want to take a look at this." We had Detroit's plan.

**ERREY:** We had a parade after beating Detroit in the first round and then losing to Toronto. We actually had a parade – like we had won the Stanley Cup. **THN**



# REBOUND

A naval disaster left Moreau shaken and suicidal. He fought to get his life back and found a passion for engineering. Now he's applying it to hockey

By Jared Clinton

**S**TEPHAN MOREAU'S BATTLE with post-traumatic stress disorder almost cost him everything. In 2004, Moreau was involved in an emergency simulation while at sea with the Royal Canadian Navy. He helped a crew member put on a firefighting suit and gear, but when the equipment was activated, a malfunction caused the equipment to set ablaze and produce clouds of chemical smoke. The man inside the suit was screaming, panicking as people rushed to his rescue.

The crew member survived, but Moreau was haunted by the accident. Even still, he can recall the sights, sounds and smells from that day. In the years that followed the accident, he stopped seeing friends and family. He began to self-medicate with alcohol and pills to escape his PTSD. And on more than one occasion, Moreau attempted to end his life.

Beyond dealing with PTSD, Moreau was also suffering the ill effects of concussions after years of playing in a rec league associated with the navy. Moreau, 42, has had at least six he is aware of, but he wouldn't be surprised if the actual count was higher con-

sidering the old-school bell-rung mentality around head injuries. In 2009, he suffered a particularly bad concussion, which resulted in a military doctor telling Moreau he had to quit playing hockey. He was left missing a big part of his identity. "I didn't feel like doing anything," Moreau said. "I wasn't even watching hockey, which is rare for me. I had lost interest in life in general, not just sports. Any activities I liked, I stopped all that. I was not the same person."

But no one could help Moreau because no one knew the deep depression he was dealing with. Even his wife had no idea. From the time of the incident in 2004, Moreau remained quiet about how it was affecting him, never speaking about what he was feeling, what he had seen and how it had weighed on him since. Then in 2010, Moreau was sent to a treatment center for addictions, and he began to speak about the accident. Upon completion of his addictions treatment, he was sent to Homewood Health in Guelph, Ont., a mental health care facility that helps those with PTSD.

Moreau returned to his home in Victoria, B.C., after he completed his treatment and eventually enrolled in the mechanical engineering program at Victoria's Camosun



## BAD MEMORIES

Moreau suffered PTSD after being involved in an accident involving a Canadian Navy crew member.

College. It was through his program he met Matt Auerbach, the head equipment manager for the WHL's Victoria Royals.

While at school, Moreau was approached to help create a robotic arm for a man suffering from ALS. The arm that had already been built was made of steel and aluminum, but Moreau had an idea to make something just as strong but much lighter using carbon fiber. "He said they couldn't find tubing that





was made of carbon fiber that was already constructed. I said, 'I play hockey and all the sticks are carbon fiber now,' " Moreau recalled. "I went to see the Victoria Royals, and they gave me a bunch of broken sticks. That's how I met Matt."

When Auerbach met Moreau, he showed him a tool Bauer had provided to change blades on its newest skate models. The tool, Auerbach said, wasn't working the way he had hoped, leaving him frustrated and looking for a solution. When Moreau saw Bauer's device, he drew up some plans for an improvement and went to work. Moreau's fix went through a few slight changes since – it has gotten lighter, Auerbach said – but overall it was an instant hit. "Some trainers were cutting themselves or didn't want to use (the Bauer tool) at all," Moreau said. "My device looks like a screwdriver, but it's all machined and made to special specifications. Those guys are loving it."

Creating a tool that was used by Auerbach and his staff became a point of pride for Moreau and even more so when Auerbach began to show it to others around the WHL. Eventually, equipment managers from other WHL clubs came calling for Moreau to fashion the tool for them. With Moreau re-

alizing there was a market for it, he set out and found more than a half-dozen interested NHL teams, including the St. Louis Blues and Columbus Blue Jackets. Moreau's gadget will also appear at the World Junior Championship, when Auerbach participates as an assistant equipment manager for Team Canada. For that, Moreau made a special gold version of the device, which has the Team Canada logo attached to the hilt. "I owe quite a bit to Matt Auerbach and the Victoria Royals," Moreau said. "I was feeling pretty s---y last year, to be honest, with my PTSD and my separation. Making the tool for Matt came at the right time to boost my morale."

The tool has done wonders for Moreau's spirits, but it hasn't lined his pockets. He doesn't have a company, and he's never actually given the device a proper name. All he has ever wanted in return for his handiwork was something that held more sentimental value than money ever could. Moreau grew up in Quebec City with a single mother and

## MAN WITH A PLAN

Moreau's creation, a tool that allows for easier skate blade removal, is a hit from major junior to the NHL.

he held dear the moments he could purchase a stick. "Buying a stick was a big deal because of my family income," Moreau said. "I would look at every stick because it was a special moment that I cherished...When teams asked me what I wanted for the tool, I said it wasn't for sale, but that I would trade it for a new stick."

Those sticks have come in handy, too, because in February 2014, Moreau played his first hockey game in five years. And while not every team can afford to send Moreau a stick, he isn't too concerned. All he really wants is to provide something of use and maybe play his own small part in a team's success. "It makes me feel better with my PTSD, keeps me busy and gives me a purpose," Moreau said. "It's really cool when I get something in return, but if I don't, no big deal. Just the fact I did it – worked on a tool and shipped it to the team – and I know they're going to be using it, that already makes me feel better. Everything else is a bonus." **THN**



## BACK ON BLADES

Moreau started playing the game he loves again after concussion complications cost him five years.



# NHL TEAM REPORTS



## FRIENDLY RIVALRY

MacKinnon and Crosby push each other at home in the off-season when they train together.

For Crosby, having the enthusiastic MacKinnon as a training partner has its own benefits. One of the most explosive skaters in the NHL, MacKinnon can more than keep up with Crosby's famously powerful lower body in the gym and on the ice, but MacKinnon also brings a youthful air to the proceedings. "He's competitive," Crosby said. "That's the biggest thing. He keeps things light and he's a funny guy, but he's obviously really fast and he works hard."

In most NHL dressing rooms, the veterans are the ones who control the communal iPod. But it's the younger MacKinnon – a voracious hip-hop fan – who does the schooling during the off-season. For Crosby, it was a crash course in today's rap landscape. "Oh yeah, big time," he said with a laugh. "Every day I'd get a new song from him. I'm much more educated about hip-hop now than I was before."

MacKinnon is proud of his work on that front. He noted that Crosby has even begun listening to a hip-hop station on satellite radio on his own, while MacKinnon managed to keep 'The Kid' as current as possible. "I got him into Fetty Wap," he said. "He likes that."

Fetty Wap, for the uninitiated, is a New Jersey-based rapper with several Billboard top-10 hits and whose song Trap Queen has been viewed more than 270 million times and counting on YouTube.

When it comes to the kings of the rink, their relationship goes back nearly a decade to when MacKinnon was a 14-year-old at Shattuck's. Both are represented by super-agent Pat Brisson, and Crosby had already

## THE 'SID' AND 'NATE' SHOW

Cole Harbour's two native NHL sons have a big brother-little brother friendship filled with rap, laughs, training and a mutual competitive fire

BY RYAN KENNEDY

**T**HE PARALLELS BETWEEN Sidney Crosby and Nathan MacKinnon are incredible. Both were phenoms out of Cole Harbour, N.S., just outside Halifax. Both attended Shattuck-St. Mary's prep school in Minnesota and both were drafted first overall in the QMJHL. Stardom followed. Then both were selected No. 1 in the NHL draft, where they became integral parts of their franchises. And in an odd twist of fate, MacKinnon is coached by Patrick Roy, who

was drafted by the Montreal Canadiens the same year the Habs took a goalie named Troy Crosby, Sid's dad.

'Sid' and 'Nate' have their own personalities, of course, and that's one of the reasons the two have trained together the past two summers. It was hard not to hear about everything they got up to in Halifax this off-season. The boys were back in town and having fun.

Like good Maritimers, they were spotted at a local fish and

chips shop alongside Philadelphia's Andrew MacDonald. And despite offers of a free meal, they politely insisted on paying for their battered goodies.

In the viral category, there were the commercials featuring the pair trying their luck as drive-thru employees for a national donut chain. The two stumble through orders and giggle like middle-schoolers throughout, while passengers end up slack-jawed when they roll up to the window to find the stars wearing visors and headsets. "It was fun," MacKinnon said. "Obviously we don't usually do that kind of stuff."

Like many Canadian stars, Crosby is usually on the serious tip in public, so the commercials revealed a more light-hearted side to the Penguins captain. "He's an intense guy," MacKinnon said. "But at the same time, he can be a goof like the rest of us. He keeps me serious, I keep him loose. That's why we're such good friends."



heard rumblings about the new kid from his sister Taylor, who also played hockey at the Minnesota prep institute. Those first interactions were a lot more reserved. "I don't think I asked him anything," MacKinnon said. "I was too scared."

But over time, the pair got closer, and Crosby has always believed in supporting hometown talent. "It's nice to be around guys from the area that have done well," he said. "There's a certain amount of pride in that. You're happy for them."

Crosby and MacKinnon began skating together four years ago, then upped their relationship to also include training the past two off-seasons. It's hard not to look at the similarities in their paths and the age difference – Crosby is eight years older – and see a big brother/little brother scenario. Both players have sisters but no brothers. MacKinnon wore No. 22 when he played for the QMJHL Halifax Mooseheads in honor of Freddie Cabana, who had billeted with his family when MacKinnon was a kid. In Crosby, he sees another role model. "He is a close friend," MacKinnon said. "And at the end of the day, he's the mature big brother."

Crosby has actually watched MacKinnon's career blossom over the years and now sees him as more of a peer than a little brother. "We're both still learning," Crosby said. "We're at different stages in our careers, but we're still learning."

Crosby has more hardware than MacKinnon right now, but it will be interesting to see how that plays out in the long run. MacKinnon already has a couple trophies Crosby will never get his hands on – a Calder, which he beat out two of Tampa's Bay's "Triplets" for, and a Memorial Cup. MacKinnon fended off another good buddy, Nashville's Seth Jones, to win it when Jones was still with WHL Portland. Crosby lost the Calder in a squeaker to Alex Ovechkin and the Memorial Cup to Corey Perry's London Knights.

On the other hand, MacKinnon will have to work fast to



“ HE KEEPS ME SERIOUS, I KEEP HIM LOOSE. THAT'S WHY WE'RE SUCH GOOD FRIENDS – Nathan MacKinnon

catch up on some other fronts. He can't match Crosby's world juniors gold, nor will he be a teenaged captain in the NHL (Gabriel Landeskog wears the letter in Colorado). But can MacKinnon win a Stanley Cup with the Avs? There will be many factors in play there in the next few years. Crosby also has Harts, Art Rosses, Ted Lindsays and a Rocket Richard, as well as numerous all-star designations.

In a league that seems to be shifting from a power game to one more reliant on speed, MacKinnon's best attributes have him sitting in a good position. But he'll also have to fend off some generational talents that followed him in the draft in 2015 picks Connor McDa-


vid and Jack Eichel. One award Crosby and MacKinnon won together was the 2015 World Championship gold medal. Thanks to the mix of NHL teams that missed the playoffs or got booted early, Canada sent an elite group of marauders to the tournament, where they promptly waxed the competition. The 6-1 destruction of Russia was even more lopsided than it sounds, and when you have Claude Giroux, Jason Spezza and Brent Burns on the same team as Sid and Nate, there will be options to score. "It was a special team," MacKinnon said. "Really dynamic. Everybody really bought in. Nobody cared about individual points. We just wanted gold."

## JEKYLL & HIJINKS

Crosby and MacKinnon showed they can be prim and proper one day, goofy and flippant the next.

But the time for reflecting on past glory is over. Both Crosby and MacKinnon have big tasks ahead of them in the NHL, playing for franchises in search of playoff success – or even a berth, really. Neither squad got off to a good start, with Pittsburgh dropping its first three games and Colorado losing two of three. Both teams also happen to play in vicious divisions, and it would be no surprise if the Metropolitan and Central circuits sent five teams to the post-season. To be a part of that, Crosby will have to mesh with new sniper Phil Kessel and hope an underwhelming D-corps can play above its standing on paper. In Colorado, MacKinnon's team must get past the ups and downs of his first two NHL sojourns, which included a surprise division title in 2014, followed by a last-place letdown in his sophomore campaign. Defense will also be a question in Denver, as MacKinnon has some pretty good weapons to work with himself in fellow forwards Landeskog and Matt Duchene and offensive D-man Tyson Barrie.

Luckily for MacKinnon, he has used his summers with Crosby wisely, picking up hints on how to be an elite NHLer along the way. "He doesn't preach, he doesn't try to be a role model," MacKinnon said. "He's just a special guy. He's been the best in the world for 10 years, gone through injuries and come back."

As for Crosby, he expressed a good deal of enthusiasm for this year's Penguins squad, emphasizing the clean slate the team had after last season's disappointing finish. Hard to believe "The Kid" has already played in the NHL for almost a decade. He's still one of the best in the world, but he's also at the point in his career where he can impart some vital truths to younger lights like MacKinnon. One such nugget? "Enjoy it," Crosby said. "It goes by quick." 



# THE MAN IN THE MIDDLE

Montreal needs improvement from within if it wants to push for a Cup this year. Can a move to center make Galchenyuk a breakout star?

BY MATT LARKIN

**S**OME STORIES WRITE THEMSELVES, and Alex Galchenyuk opened 2015-16 using the ice as his personal computer.

This season was supposed to mark the breakout for Galchenyuk, 21, whom the Montreal Canadiens drafted third overall in 2012. It was a logical progression for a youngster who set career highs across the

board last season, notching 20 goals and 46 points. And there he was, in Montreal's first game of the season, rifling home the game-winning goal against the Toronto Maple Leafs at Air Canada Centre. And there he was again, tasked with shutdown duty in the final minute after the Leafs pulled goaltender Jonathan Bernier. Galchenyuk started the season that he's ex-

## LEFT LEANING NO MORE

Galchenyuk spent most of his first three seasons at left wing, but he's much more comfortable at center.

pected to become Montreal's most important forward by... being Montreal's most important forward. It was too perfect.

Why the extra pressure for Galchenyuk all of a sudden? Because he represents the closest thing to a major off-season acquisition GM Marc Bergevin

believing in me, and he asked if I would feel comfortable going to center," Galchenyuk said.

It was a challenge he accepted in a heartbeat. "Just an overall good lunch. It's a different atmosphere in the restaurant than the locker room. Especially since the steak was pretty good, too," Galchenyuk laughed.

He finally got to start a training camp knowing he'd play center in the top six, albeit not on Pacioretty's line just yet.

**“ HE'S UNBELIEVABLE FOR HIS AGE. HE'S JUST GOING TO CONTINUE TO GET BETTER ”** – P.K. Subban

could muster. The Habs did very little to improve a good team that had trouble scoring and depended too much on all-universe goalie Carey Price. Free agent signee Alexander Semin is a lottery ticket, and trading Brandon Prust for Zack Kassian quickly blew up in the team's face after Kassian was injured in a car accident while riding with an impaired driver. The key to Montreal's offense spiking: improving from within the organization by giving its best young player a new assignment. It was time to move Galchenyuk to his natural position of center.

He'd spent most of his first three years in the NHL on the left wing, as the Habs deployed some permutation of Tomas Plekanec, David Desharnais and Lars Eller as their top three pivots. But none of that trio, not even Plekanec in his best years, constituted a true No. 1 center, the type worthy of feeding stud goal scorer Max Pacioretty and challenging for a league scoring crown. Galchenyuk, whom scouts compared to Ron Francis leading up to the 2012 draft, is the lone Canadien capable of growing into that role.

Imagine Galchenyuk's pleasure, then, during a summer lunch with coach Michel Therrien, when Therrien offered the position change. "It was just nice to see him, to talk to me,

Galchenyuk commenced the year between Semin and Eller. No longer worrying about the wing gave Galchenyuk more time to work on faceoffs, which he did with the virtuoso Plekanec, though Galchenyuk insists their playing styles are very different and there was only so much he could absorb. Still, he was eager to test his progress practically after winning only 44.6 percent of the 327 draws he took in his first three campaigns. "No matter how hard I worked in the summer on faceoffs, I didn't take them as much the last couple years," Galchenyuk said. "So I only get better by repetition."

He knows the Canadiens need him to score, maybe break 25 goals and 60 points, if they want to improve on last year, when they ranked 20th in goals and lost in the Eastern Conference semifinal to the Tampa Bay Lightning. But Galchenyuk doesn't take for granted the defensive responsibilities every center must shoulder. He relishes them. And he couldn't be clear enough how happy he was to be trusted with Game 1 of the season on the line. "Yeah, absolutely, no doubt," he said. "I'm trying to focus on the defensive zone, trying to be solid and spend a lot of time in practices focusing and looking at systems. It was nice to be out





ALEX GALCHENYUK

there, and hopefully it will continue to be that way."

It's not like Montreal lacks for star power. Price is arguably the greatest player on the planet today, and P.K. Subban is among the sport's pre-eminent

blueliners. But for true Stanley Cup contention, this team needs growth from the inside out. And maybe Galchenyuk is ready to rub shoulders with the team's elite contributors. "I look forward to watching

his progress as a player in this league," Subban said. "He continues to mature. People can't forget his age, how young he is. He's unbelievable for his age. He's just going to continue to get better." **T.M.**

## HIGH RISK, HIGH GAIN

Listed below are the 2012 draft class' leaders in games played. Few would've guessed three years ago that Galchenyuk would rank first. That's not a knock on his skill. It's because Montreal gambled at the time since he'd played just two regular season games and six playoff games in his draft year. Galchenyuk had knee surgery in October 2011.

3		ALEX GALCHENYUK 198
1		NAIL YAKUPOV 196
6		HAMPUS LINDHOLM 159
5		MORGAN RIELLY 157
16		TOM WILSON 152
15		CODY CECI 135
14		ZEMGUS GIRGENSONS 135
9		JACOB TROUBA 134
17		TOMAS HERTL 122
11		FILIP FORSBERG* 104

\* Drafted by WSH

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# AGE AIN'T NUTHIN' BUT A NUMBER

For Chara, all the buzz about his decline is 'crazy.' He expects a bounce-back from himself – and the B's

**T**HE HOCKEY NEWS PICKED BOSTON to finish sixth in the Atlantic. Now who's ready to explain that to rejuvenated Bruins Captain Zdeno Chara? "If the predictions are not going to empower you, don't listen to them," 'Big Z' said. "Obviously I can't control what people are saying. They have their predictions, but I just choose to be strong, not feel sorry for myself because I'm 38, and just be a leader. I'm very motivated, dedicated and focused on the process of reaching my goals."

His performance and numbers slipped last season, and many believed his career was winding down. Chara says that's short-term memory loss. "When I was 36 and I was a runner-up for the Norris Trophy," he said, "no one said I was too old. Then I got hurt when I was 37, then I'm old. How do you get from Norris Trophy runner-up to 'Hey, he's too old', in six months? Kind of crazy isn't it?"

Nine games into last season, after finishing second to Duncan Keith for the 2014 Norris, Chara tore a knee ligament that kept him out of the lineup for a month and a half. The misfortune returned in the spring when he played the final few games with a fractured ankle,

hobbled just as the Bruins were trying to jump into the final playoff spot.

Falling short was a stark adjustment for this perennial Eastern Conference power. "We still have...very good leaders, a very good strong core of players, same coach, and, even with changes upstairs, (new GM) Don Sweeney has been there 10 years," Chara said. "He was there when we won, Cam Neely when we won, Charlie Jacobs when we won. So yeah, there have been some changes...it's been five years since we won, so that's going to happen no matter what."

From the 2011 championship team, Chara, Patrice Bergeron, David Krejci, Brad Marchand, Dennis Seidenberg, Adam McQuaid, Chris Kelly and goalie Tuukka Rask remain. The other moving parts need to find form quickly.

An upper-body ailment held him out of the lineup to start the season, but talking before the injury, Chara, who has three seasons left on his deal, was ready to prove he still has some good years left. "I'm going to honor my contract and play as hard as I can, and I'd like to play as long as I can," he said. "I'm feeling healthy and strong again, and motivated." — **ROB SIMPSON**

## EARLY-SEASON SURPRISE



Breaking up **Corey Perry** and Ryan Getzlaf may not last, but it's an attempt to diversify the offense. In games against the league's top teams, having the pair on one line subjected them to defensive scrutiny. Coach Bruce Boudreau worked Getzlaf between newcomers Carl Hagelin and Chris Stewart, with Perry bolstering the second line.



Give **John Scott** full marks for bucking evolution and hanging around as a one-dimensional enforcer. While other sluggers have been relegated to the AHL or out of the game, the 6-foot-8, 260-pounder has eked an NHL salary as a 14th forward the past seven seasons in Minnesota, Chicago, New York, Buffalo, San Jose and now Arizona.



The Bruins decided **Malcolm Subban** would be better served as a No. 1 goalie in the minors another year instead of backing up a Vezina-caliber starter in Boston. The Bruins signed journeyman backup Jonas Gustavsson to a one-year deal. Subban, 21, will carry the load in the AHL after playing only 33 and 35 games the past two seasons.



People around Buffalo were surprised during camp how defenseman **Brendan Guhle** lasted until late in the second round of the draft. Guhle was often the Sabres' best D-man in the pre-season. Unfortunately, he started the year on the injured list after taking a thunderous hit in the pre-season and then was returned to junior.



When the Flames broke camp 12 months ago, **Brett Kulak** ranked no higher than 15th on their pro depth chart at defense and started 2014-15 with the ECHL's Colorado Eagles. After ripping up that league in half a season, Kulak showed well in the AHL, then played Game 82 in the NHL. Tremendous poise this fall earned him a starting NHL job.





## EARLY-SEASON SURPRISE



The Hurricanes were destined to be a threadbare squad, but at least the veteran presence of **James Wisniewski** would take a bit of blueline pressure off fellow old hand Ron Hainsey and young star Justin Faulk. That is, of course, until Wisniewski wrecked his ACL just 47 seconds into his first game of the season. He'll miss six months.



Feisty Slovak **Marko Dano** arrived in the Brandon Saad trade and took Saad's spot with Jonathan Toews and Marian Hossa on the top line in camp. Just before the season, the Hawks shockingly sent Dano to the AHL. The move seemed temporary while Bryan Bickell cleared waivers, but Chicago ended up keeping Bickell in the NHL.



**Mikko Rantanen** played and flourished against men in Finland's top league last year. He thus had an outside shot to jump right to NHL at 18 after Colorado drafted him 10th overall in June. Rantanen, a sniper, impressed enough to make the team. It was especially surprising since Rantanen was eligible to start the year in the AHL.



**Jack Johnson's** bankruptcy proceedings resurfaced this summer when he tried to change his filing from Chapter 11 to Chapter 7. His creditors were none too happy and went so far as to audit his dry-cleaning bills, which they claimed were excessive. Needless to say, his parents – the alleged cause of the mess – didn't help.



Brett Ritchie's wrist surgery left an open winger slot in Dallas' starting lineup, and **Mattias Janmark** came seemingly out of nowhere to seize it. He blew the Stars away with an impressive camp and pre-season. The Stars love his speed and ability to play multiple positions. They acquired him from Detroit in last year's Erik Cole trade.



## FIRST THE TACO, THEN THE MONEY

Lack had a summer to remember: he got some new ink, and he inked an extension with his new club

**EVEN BEFORE HE APPEARED IN A** game for the Carolina Hurricanes, Eddie Lack was a fan favorite for one reason: his new taco tattoo.

Lack has other more serious ink – his parents' birthdates, the palace gates of his native Sweden – but none gets more attention than the one he added to his arm this summer of his favorite food. "I have a lot of meaningful tattoos," Lack said. "I wanted to get something a little more fun, too. It ended up being a taco."

Lack already had a pretty good idea of what he was getting into with the Hurricanes thanks to his friendship with Swedish teammates Victor Rask and Elias Lindholm, but as an introduction to Lack's personality upon his arrival to a new team, the taco tattoo pretty much covered it. "He's really laid back and likes to have fun," said Hurricanes incumbent goalie Cam Ward. "I write that on my stick, actually: 'The more fun you have the better you do.' And he's kind of like a breathing example of that, living proof of it. He enjoys the game, and we're going to have fun pushing each other."

The tattoo wasn't the only change to Lack's life this summer. The Hurricanes acquired the 27-year-old from Vancou-

ver to challenge Ward for the starting job and, during training camp, signed him to a two-year contract extension.

The deal is reasonable enough – \$2.5 million in 2016-17, \$3 million in 2017-18 – that the Hurricanes could still trade Lack, but both sides now have some security. And if Lack can usurp the No. 1 job from Ward, whose contract is up after this year, it'll be a bargain.

Coming out of camp, Lack had yet to supplant Ward, who got the opening-night start. This is not new territory for Lack, having played behind Roberto Luongo and Ryan Miller with the Canucks. With a new contract in hand, he knows his opportunity is not far off. "Obviously I wanted to play, but Cam's been here a very long time, and it's going to be a long season," Lack said. "I'm just going to be patient and wait for my chance, and when I do get in there, I'm going to do my best to help the team and get as many wins as possible." – **LUKE DECOCK**





# THE EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

The Wings are known for methodically developing youngsters. But 19-year-old Larkin broke the mold

**T**EENAGERS AREN'T SUPPOSED TO make the Detroit Red Wings.

It's a pillar we rely on for comfort in this crazy hockey world of ours, and now Dylan Larkin, 19, is mucking it up.

But if he's good enough for Detroit's brass and good enough to start the season on a line with Henrik Zetterberg, then yeah, there may be something there. "He's a two-way, 200-foot player," said Detroit GM Ken Holland. "He has a lot of will, a lot of determination and he's got a big motor."

Larkin was the Big Ten's rookie of the year last season, posting 47 points in 35 games for Michigan. A state native who relished the chance to play in Ann Arbor, the young center admitted it wasn't an easy decision to leave the Wolverines after just one season. Having seen Larkin play so well at the world juniors, Team USA's brass invited him to play for the men's World Championship squad in the spring. "That was a whole experience itself," Larkin said. "I thought I had a pretty good World Championship, and after skating with those guys, I knew I wanted to be a pro."

Larkin played a checking role on a team that won a surprise bronze med-

al, shutting out Jakub Voracek, Jaromir Jagr and the host Czechs 3-0. For Holland, it was a tipping point: his shiny prospect proved he could thrive in any role. "I told Dylan and his parents that whatever decision he made, we were good with," he said. "He's a unique player for me in that he can play top-six or bottom-six. He's going to be able to do lots of things that can be used by the coach."

Perhaps lost is that Larkin is still eligible to play for Team USA's WJC entry this winter. For Larkin's new boss, the equation is simple: "If Dylan's in the NHL and he's playing regularly and is important for us, he will not be available," Holland said. "If he's in the American League, we'll make him available."

In the meantime, Larkin will be getting used to a world in which Zetterberg and Niklas Kronwall are no longer guys he sees through a TV screen. "Ever since I can remember watching the NHL, they've been playing," he said. "But it's not as intimidating now that I know them a little bit. I'm excited to learn more from them."

Too bad the University of Michigan won't give him course credit for his work at Joe Louis Arena. — **RYAN KENNEDY**

## EARLY-SEASON SURPRISE



The Red Wings surprised by inking **Dan Cleary** to a one-year deal only to waive him before the season. It was a signing of loyalty to a longtime player who turned down a three-year deal to stay in Detroit two years ago. Since he makes only \$950,000 on a one-year deal, his cap hit comes off the books when he goes to the minors.



**Anton Slepyshev** and Connor McDavid faced each other at the 2014 WJC in Sweden, with the Russians beating the Canadians in the bronze-medal game. They started the season as linemates with the Oilers. Slepyshev, 21, spent the past two seasons in the KHL and wasn't expected to crack Edmonton's opening-day roster.



**Connor Brickley** had 21 goals in four seasons at Vermont but 22 in his first full AHL season. That improvement, plus inspired play in camp, landed him on Florida's opening-night roster. Meanwhile, despite a tough season in the minors and not getting any games with the big team last season, Quinton Howden also made the Panthers.



**Jonathan Quick** is a notorious slow starter, but losing three games in regulation time to begin a season is a nine-year low for him. Quick has had a save percentage below his .915 career average in six of his nine seasons. His .861 SP start isn't the worst, though. He's been at .852 and .854 through three games earlier in his career.



At the start of the season, players reveal the modest things they did over their summers, from training to golfing to family vacations. But Minnesota's **Nino Niederreiter**? The thrill seeker strapped himself into a chair attached to the top of a plane and flew over the Alps in the exposed air for half an hour. Nobody can top his off-season.





## EARLY-SEASON SURPRISE



When **Mike Condon** was a junior at Princeton, he did a Wall Street internship with an eye to becoming an investment banker. He'll need an investment banker if he stays with the Habs all season and collects a full \$575,000 salary. Condon, 25, played well in camp and surprised even himself earning the No. 2 goalie job behind Carey Price.



It seemed the Preds had big immediate plans for **Steve Moses** when they signed him for \$1 million over the summer. He lit up the KHL last season for 36 goals and 57 points in 60 games. In the end, though, Nashville sent him to the AHL. The reason: getting Moses, a Massachusetts native, accustomed to North American ice.



Veterans looking for teams were a big trend this fall, and **Jiri Tlustý** landed a one-year contract with New Jersey. The erstwhile Carolina winger will not only be a source of offense for the Devils, but his presence also allowed them to send top prospect Pavel Zacha back to junior. Zacha will be shielded from a lot of losing in Newark.



The Isles are not a cookie-cutter franchise, so drafting the charming/infuriating **Josh Ho-Sang** in 2014 was a perfect fit. But reality struck on the first day of camp when Ho-Sang slept in. The Isles immediately sent the gifted scorer back to junior. There were no hard feelings, and everyone said the right things, but it was quite a story.



The Rangers have an annual award for the best rookie in training camp. This year's winner was **Oscar Lindberg**. The Swede, 23, got more than just the Lars-Erik Sjoborg award (named for the team's longtime European scout), though. Lindberg also won a roster spot and even scored in the season opener against Chicago.



## ELIAS DOWN, BUT NOT OUT

Injuries and off-year be damned. Soon-to-be 40-year-old believes he's got more than just a swan song left

### ALL PATRIK ELIAS AN OPTIMIST.

Coming off what he describes as a poor 2014-15 season, and sidelined for the start of this campaign with a nagging right knee issue that put him on the New Jersey Devils' injured list without a single training camp practice or pre-season game, Elias says he wants to play another year – even if it's for another NHL team.

Never mind that he will turn 40 in April. "Some guys know one year is all they have left and maybe one year is all they want to play. I'm hoping this is not my last year," Elias said. "As I was getting ready this year I honestly thought, 'What if this is it?' But (the passion is) still there.

"Obviously a lot of things could change throughout a season, but as of right now I'm going in to have a better season than I had, enjoy it, and hopefully it will lead to me sticking around for another year."

It has not been a good start. Devils coach John Hynes, hired this off-season, said he approached training camp and the pre-season without Elias in mind. "Right now we're moving forward with the guys that are healthy and ready to go," Hynes said. "Patrik is

a big part of our team when he's ready to come back. We expect him to be a key factor. I've said that from Day 1. But right now our focus isn't on when we get Patrik back. It's focused on the guys we have and making our team and individuals better."

So far, Elias said surgery is not in his plans. He said he and the team are being cautious and rest is the key. He began skating on his own in mid-October. "We want to make sure I play most of the season," Elias said. "I don't want to play one game and then have to sit out for a long period."

Although he enjoys living in New Jersey, Elias spent most of the summer back home in the Czech Republic. He dotes on his two young daughters, Sophia and Kaila.

The veteran winger has watched some team practices, but he was not among the Devils players who attended the Oct. 6 press conference announcing Martin Brodeur's No. 30 will be retired Feb. 9 and a statue of the goalie will be installed outside Prudential Center.

Elias' No. 26 will surely be the fifth number the Devils raise to the rafters, but he is hoping to postpone that for at least another two years. — **RICH CHERE**



# TRY BUMP, NOT SLUMP

Fans, the team and Stone himself are looking for bigger things in his sophomore campaign

**M**ARK STONE WILL NEVER BE accused of having hands of stone. But this year he arrived at camp to expectations he'll improve upon the surprising 26 goals he potted last year as a rookie.

As the Senators opened the season, Stone, 23, showed up with a three-year, \$10.5-million contract under his belt, and after he scored 64 points last season, the club was hopeful he'd improve. And so was Stone.

He knows in the tight Atlantic Division, where only a handful of points could separate second through sixth place, he has to be better to help the club get back to the post-season and even win a series. "I want to be relied on, and I'm going to be relied on," Stone said. "It's an exciting challenge for me. I'm excited to take on more. I want to be part of a team that is improving every day and has a chance to make the playoffs and make noise in the playoffs."

Last year, it was tough for Stone to make even a whimper in the post-season because he sustained a broken wrist after getting slashed by Montreal Canadiens defenseman P.K. Subban in Game 1 of the first round. Stone played the rest of the series, but he had a dif-

ficult time shooting the puck.

The Senators know Stone is a cornerstone piece because he's solid at both ends of the ice, he makes smart decisions and he's developed chemistry with center Kyle Turris and left winger Clarke MacArthur. Stone was second in team scoring last season. Getting the contract out of the way early in the summer helped him focus on getting ready for 2015-16.

A finalist for the Calder Trophy, he was able to get the deal done when agent Craig Oster sat down with assistant GM Pierre Dorion in Las Vegas in June. It was a huge relief. "I tried not to think about it, but it's one of those things where it's almost impossible not to," Stone said. "When I was in Vegas, to hear some of the numbers they were throwing around I was really happy to finally get it finalized."

Stone was a big reason the Senators went on the miraculous stretch run last year to get to the post-season. He, like everybody else in Ottawa, has high hopes for this year. "We're not scared of anybody," he said. "We just have to go out and play our game. If we play a full 60 (minutes), we're comfortable with anyone." — **BRUCE GARRIOCH**

## EARLY-SEASON SURPRISE



Although he wasn't in the lineup opening night, D-man **Chris Wideman** cracked the Senators roster to open the season. The Sens were so concerned over the summer about losing Wideman as a UFA that they signed him to a deal that will pay him \$600,000 at the NHL level but \$400,000 if he plays in the minors.



Though the Flyers had some great prospects on the blueline, they had eight contracts to deal with already, so the kids weren't getting a crack this year. But waiving **Andrew MacDonald**? That was surprising. The veteran had been a possession black hole and had a big contract, but it was shocking to see Philly swallow such a lumpy pill.



It's hard enough for first-rounders to crack the NHL at 18, but **Daniel Sprong** did it as a second-rounder, going 46th overall in 2015. Born and raised in Amsterdam, he and his family moved to Montreal when he was 10 to further his hockey career. The gamble has already paid off, as the fast, talented right winger debuted opening night.



The **Robby Fabbri** era has begun in St. Louis. For now. Fabbri, 19, cracked the Blues roster but sustained a concussion in Game 2. And he may only get a nine-game trial, as he's eligible to return to the OHL. But he has little left to prove at that level, and the Blues could use his dynamic offensive skill set, so he'll get a chance when healthy.



**Joonas Donskoi** may as well change his first name to Joe. A Florida Panther pick in 2010, Donskoi, 23, signed as a free agent out of Karpat Oulu in the off-season and has made headlines since. He looked most at home playing on the top line with Joe Thornton and Joe Pavelski. Donskoi has flashed playmaking ability and poise with the puck.



## EARLY-SEASON SURPRISE



After four goals last season, blueliner **Jason Garrison** hit half that total in the first game and became the first player in NHL history to score in 3-on-3 overtime. His goal totals have steadily declined since he got 16 for Florida in 2011-12, but 3-on-3 will give a player like him more of a chance to display his offensive prowess.



It was surprising to see defenseman **Frank Corrado** placed on waivers given how highly the Canucks thought of him as a prospect, and for Buffalo, Arizona and Edmonton to pass on him, which left him for the Maple Leafs to take. Corrado, 22, played 28 NHL games the past three years and seemed to be building toward full-time duty.



Listen to the excitement in **Ben Hutton's** voice during an interview in Vancouver's season opener. You'd think he was still playing youth hockey. Hutton, a 2012 fifth-rounder, left Maine after his third year and supplanted Yannick Weber on the blueline. The departures of Kevin Bieksa, Ryan Stanton and Adam Clendinning also created space.



Tough love works on **Stanislav Galiev**. At one point in camp, coach Barry Trotz said the Russian youngster, 23, hadn't stood out and was almost out of time. But Galiev, a power play ace, made amends and earned a roster slot. Maybe drinking that cobra heart and blood cocktail in Vietnam (which he Instagrammed) this summer helped.



One reason Winnipeg made few off-season roster changes: leaving room for uber-prospect **Nikolaj Ehlers**. It wasn't a surprise he made the team out of camp, but Ehlers posted the best possession numbers of every Jet in the pre-season. That's a double-take stat considering Winnipeg was a dominant possession team last year.



## BO KNOWS LEADERSHIP

Future captain Horvat busted through the depth chart to land on the second line – well ahead of schedule

**H**OW DO YOU PULL ON THE REINS when a thoroughbred wants to break from the gate?

That was the delicious dilemma facing Vancouver Canucks coach Willie Desjardins in slotting Bo Horvat into his lineup this season. The bench boss wanted to protect his center from the dreaded sophomore jinx by putting the 20-year-old on the third line. He reasoned Horvat would remain defensively diligent and be good in transition to build on his 13-goal rookie campaign. That was the form chart. It didn't last long.

Horvat bolted from the pre-season gate, scored four goals and easily supplanted newly acquired Brandon Sutter on the second line. In Horvat aligning with Sven Baertschi and Radim Vrbata, the hope is the 2013 ninth-overall pick can give the Canucks a needed second scoring wave. And when you consider Horvat was an off-season gym rat and continued to improve an explosive stride, the odds of him succeeding are good, if not great. "I feel the best I've ever felt going into a season," said Horvat, who suffered a pre-season shoulder injury last year. "I'm a lot more confident than I was last year, and for me

to be comfortable and know I can carry the puck, make plays and be good defensively, it's good to have in my pocket. It lets me go and play my game and not worry about anything else."

Horvat is future captain material for more than his ability. Amiable and accountable, he soaked up guidance from Derek Dorsett last season – sitting beside the veteran winger on the charter and in the dressing room – and was willing to serve as a mentor to 19-year-olds Jake Virtanen and Jared McCann, even though he's just one year older. Horvat is also part of the club's marketing campaign, the poster boy for everything that's right about a team in transition. "Being a leader is definitely in my blood – I've been a leader on every team I've been on," Horvat said.

None of this surprises the Canucks. At training camp, Horvat humbly suggested he was still fighting for a roster position. For Alexandre Burrows, that was laughable but understandable. "You see him in the gym and he's pushing dumbbells like crazy," Burrows said. "To see a 20-year-old benching and squatting a lot of weight, it's really impressive because you know he's going to take his game to the next level." – **BEN KUZMA**

# PROSPECT REPORT



## PITTSBURGH'S DUTCH DELIGHT

Sprong's family moved to Canada from the Netherlands so he had a better chance to turn a passion into a career. It's paid off

BY SHELLY ANDERSON

**L**IKE MOST NHL PLAYERS, SIDNEY Crosby talks often of his parents and the role they played in his career – taking him to practices and road games, making financial sacrifices, even putting up with him ruining the family dryer with his missed shots in their Nova Scotia basement.

Trina and Troy Crosby never had to contemplate what Sandra and Hannie Sprong did, however. Sidney Crosby's passion is their country's national sport. When the Sprongs' son Daniel was seven and showed a predilection for hockey, they did something remarkable. They moved the family from the Netherlands to

**DANIEL SPRONG**



**POSITION**  
Right wing

**AGE** 18  
**HEIGHT** 6-0  
**WEIGHT** 180 lbs

**DRAFTED**  
PIT, 46th in 2015

### 18 AND PENGUIN

Sprong cracked Pittsburgh's Day 1 roster three months after being drafted in Round 2.

suburban Montreal. "I'm very proud of them, what they have done for me," said Daniel. "They sacrificed their whole life for me."

Coming off an 88-point season with Charlottetown of the QMJHL, Sprong was drafted in the second round (46th overall) this summer by the Pittsburgh Penguins and had such a strong training camp he made the roster as an 18-year-old.

Can you imagine how much pressure there could be on someone growing up knowing his or her parents invested that much in a dream? Crosby can: "Maybe a bit," he said, smiling at his understatement. "Maybe a bit."

If there is pressure, Sprong isn't showing any effects. His nickname could easily be 'Comfortable.' As in, "I remember when I played my first game (in Canada), I felt really comfortable." Or, "I felt really comfortable in training camp the first few days."

The Penguins had no first-round draft pick this year, but they have treated Sprong as if he was one. In the opening couple of camp practices in September, Sprong was placed on a line with Crosby. That, he said, underscored what already was a strong level of confidence that he could play at the NHL level.

By the start of the season, Sprong was put alongside center Matt Cullen on the fourth line. Cullen, an NHL veteran of nearly two decades, was impressed with several aspects of Sprong's game – his shot, his poise and the way he hangs onto the puck with authority yet doesn't try to be a one-man show as a lot of scorers coming out of junior are wont to do. "He's just a dynamic

player," Cullen said. "He brings a lot to the table. He's going to be a really exciting player."

"He's a confident kid. He definitely is. That's a good thing. Most guys coming in are pretty cautious and intimidated. That's completely normal. But he's a little different in that regard."

As the season began, Pittsburgh coach Mike Johnston found room for improvement in Sprong's game, but nothing major. "Off the puck he still has a couple of habits he has to change, just his positioning and his reaction, some of those things," Johnston said. "But with the puck he's a determined individual. He's got very good puck skills. He makes things happen."

Sprong elevated his prospect status in his first year with Charlottetown when he had 30 goals and 68 points in 67 games. He followed that in 2014-15 with 39 goals and 88 points in 68 games, and finished 12th in league scoring.

Those numbers probably seemed unreachable while he was still losing his baby teeth in the Netherlands, where hockey is not a major sport. Once in Canada, Sprong thrived, and he began playing with older boys, including Tampa Bay's Jonathan Drouin and Arizona's Anthony Duclair, both two years his senior.

All made possible by his parents' decision to relocate so Daniel could not only follow his father, Hannie, who played hockey, but also have a chance to reach levels of the game Hannie could not. "I think of myself," Cullen said. "I have three little boys now, nine, seven and five. Would I be willing to make that move for my own kids? That speaks really highly of what kind of talent he must have had at a young age to have his parents do that, but also the commitment his parents made to him. Kind of a cool story." **TUN**

# 46

Sprong's 2015 draft slot, making him the first second-rounder to make an opening-day NHL roster since Brandon Saad (43rd) in 2011. Can he stick for the entire season, like Ryan O'Reilly (33rd) in '09 or Patrice Bergeron (45th) in '03?





# BLOODLINES AND BONDS THAT TIE

Kieffer Bellows has a lot of the same attributes as his father, Brian. But their path to the NHL will be completely different

BY RYAN KENNEDY

**IT'S NOT EASY FOR YOUNGER** players to score in the United States League, making Kieffer Bellows somewhat of a prodigy. As a 16-year-old last season, he led the Sioux Falls Stampede with 33 goals and 52 points in 58 games, then averaged a point per game in 12 post-season contests as the team won the Clark Cup.

Probably no surprise then that Bellows has some pretty solid hockey genes. His father is Brian Bellows, a star in the 1980s and '90s, mostly with the Minnesota North Stars. Kieffer was born and raised in the Twin Cities suburb of Edina, where he won a state title with his high school Hornets under former NHLer Curt Giles. Geo-

## BORN WINNER

Bellows has high school and USHL titles and is aiming for U-18 and NCAA championships.

graphically, he couldn't follow in his father's OHL footsteps because Minnesota is WHL territory. Instead, Kieffer joined the U.S. National Team Development Program and will head to Boston University in 2016-17.

Given how Team USA has rolled at the world under-18s lately and how good the Terriers recruiting classes have been, it's not crazy to think Bellows could win four titles in four seasons with four different programs. He's halfway there.

Traditionally, players join the NTDP for two years, not one. But NTDP coach Danton Cole wasn't going to hold that against Bellows. "He added a lot of skill to our lineup," Cole said. "But he's also physical and plays defensively."

Bellows hit the ground running for the NTDP, notching seven points in his first six games – which included tough battles against college teams from Lake Superior State and Northern Michigan. Very quickly, the left winger has formed a potent duo with center Clayton Keller. Chemistry, both on and off the ice, was important for the new kid. "It was a hard decision leaving Sioux Falls after such a great year," Bellows said. "When I went to visit the program, coach Cole made me feel I was already part of the team. The guys made me feel comfortable too and I can't thank them enough for that."

Bellows got a similar vibe when he visited Boston University and Terriers coach David Quinn was a factor in getting the hot-shooting youngster to pick the NTDP. His former Stampede bench boss also vouched for the program, which meant a lot to

the family. "Cary Eades and David Quinn are two coaches we trust," said Brian Bellows. "Both said the NTDP was a good spot for Kieffer."

Not surprisingly, father and son are close and it's not just hockey that has them on the same page: the Bellows boys also enjoy wakeboarding. But the most prevalent bond is one that forms between two elite players, one retired and the other just starting out. "He means everything to me," Kieffer said. "He comes to all my games. He's something special; he's my best friend."

At 6-foot-1, 194 pounds, Bellows wasn't a string-bean when he came to the NTDP, which is famous for building up the bodies of America's best and brightest. He can still get stronger, but in the immediacy he could get away with being a one-year guy on the team. Plus, his intangibles have made him valuable. "Coaches like players who compete and want to learn," Cole said. "He jumped right into the fold. His work ethic is good and



KIEFFER BELLOWES

he has leadership qualities."

Brian Bellows was a tremendously hyped draft prospect when he played for the OHL's Kitchener Rangers in the early 1980s, eventually going second overall behind Boston's Gord Kluzak in 1982. Kieffer will likely slot in closer to the top 10 or top 15, depending on how his campaign with the NTDP goes.

But one thing is for sure: production runs in the family. **THE**



## KIEFFER BELLOWES

POS LW AGE 17 HT 6-1 WT 194 lbs  
DRAFTED Ranked 19th for 2016 by ISS



## REGINA'S MAN OF STEEL

The Regina Pats turned over a competitive roster last season and decided to build for the future around young Sam Steel

BY DANIEL NUGENT-BOWMAN

**J**OHNN PADDOCK ISN'T EXACTLY SURE when he realized Sam Steel was destined to be his go-to player on the Regina Pats.

It didn't take long, though. "Probably the first time I saw him or the first time in a game," said Paddock, now in his second year running the Pats. "It's not really difficult."

Steel proved his worth quickly as a WHL rookie last season and his old-school coach assigned him vital responsibilities generally reserved for the league's elder statesmen. Steel was a fixture manning the point on the power play, doing so as a 16-year-old forward. But Paddock was even more impressed with Steel's ability to act as the lone forward when the Pats were playing two skaters shorthanded. "I loved it," Steel said. "I considered it a challenge and I love challenges."

"In midget and bantam, my coaches stressed that a lot. I got called up

as a 15-year-old, and I learned that if you can't be trusted on the ice defensively you're not going to get on the ice."

Steel more than earned Paddock's trust in his freshman WHL campaign. He used what Paddock called his "top-end speed" and time on the man advantage to rack up 17 goals and 54 points in 61 games, affirming his status as top prospect for the 2016 NHL draft.

In fact, Steel impressed so much he became the player Paddock deemed the franchise should be built around – albeit in controversial fashion. The Pats owned the WHL's fifth-best winning percentage a year ago when a slew of veterans, including Calgary first-rounder Morgan Klimchuk, were shipped out.

With the powerhouse Brandon Wheat Kings favored to win the Eastern Conference – which they did – and the Pats short on draft picks,

### PLIABLE METTLE

The Pats love the fact they can play draft-eligible Steel in any situation and see him succeed.

Paddock set his sights on the future.

Leading scorers Dryden Hunt and Connor Gay also exited along with captain Kyle Burroughs. In came defenseman Connor Hobbs, a Washington Capitals pick in June, and prospect center Jake Leschyshyn – son of NHL defenseman Curtis Leschyshyn and Steel's current billet roommate. "It was tough on a lot of guys," Steel said of the purge. "But at the same time, it was an exciting time getting all those young, talented players in."

Steel and company form the young core of the Pats, who are in search of their first WHL title since 1980. "There was no choice," said Paddock, whose team lost in the second round to Brandon with Steel shelved with a high-ankle sprain. "We had to do this to ensure any sort of future."

The Pats got younger last season and are an even more youthful group now. It will be a case of short-term pain bringing long-term gain. "When teams do this you could see a (win) total in the 20s," a scout said, "but then you just might get 200 wins over the next four years."

While the Pats have playoff ambitions, they hope the latter part of that statement is true. If it is, Steel will play a key role. At 5-foot-11 and 175 pounds, Steel will need to bulk up in order to handle the rigors of being a franchise player in the WHL. As Paddock notes, 17-year-olds like Steel generally aren't physically equipped to compete against those two years their senior.

Steel was named an alternate captain before the season because his actions speak louder than his words. "He's definitely a leader who leads by example," Leschyshyn said. "He's not a vocal guy in the room, but he'll voice his opinion every once in a while. Everyone listens to that."

For beneath that quiet, determined, lead-by-example makeup, Steel's got it in him to be a star. "He's going to be a really good two-way player in the pros," Paddock said. "He's a dedicated guy. He's going to be the captain of the Regina Pats someday. He's got leadership. He's got talent. He's got character. He's got skill. He's got all the pieces."



### POSITION

Center

### AGE

17

### HEIGHT

5-11

### WEIGHT

175 lbs

### DRAFTED

Ranked 20th for 2016 by ISS

52

Goals for Steel in his final year of bantam. He also had 52 assists.





# NOWHERE BUT UP

Wisconsin put the 'Bad' in Badgers during a miserable four-win season in 2014-15

**M**IKE EAVES HAS COACHED THE Wisconsin Badgers to a Frozen Four title, another appearance in the final and numerous conference titles. He knows a thing or two about coaching. So when he and his staff gathered for a post-mortem this summer, it hadn't quite sunk in just how bad his 2014-15 squad was. The traditional powerhouse Badgers had gone 4-26-5. "We stepped back at the end of the season and said 'Geez, that's terrible!'" Eaves said. "It was like a cold barrel of water getting poured on us."

Which raises the question, what the heck happened to Wisconsin? The Badgers did lose two key players the previous summer when left winger Nic Ker-diles (Anaheim) and defenseman Jake McCabe (Buffalo) left a year early, but a school with six national titles should be able to weather such inevitable exits. Eaves knew the team would be young, but he did not anticipate scoring would be a brutal chore – just 59 goals in 35 games. "Nobody saw it coming," Eaves said. "We worked hard but never got rewarded. We could never get the right leg on the horse and ride it."

Now consider this: the Badgers are



rounder Brock Boeser switched commitments from Wisconsin to North Dakota. Eeks!

The Badgers can't get worse than four wins, can they? And are top prospects abandoning the program all of a sudden?

Not likely, no. Wisconsin will have more scoring depth and one of the brightest lights is freshman Luke Kunin, a 17-year-old from the U.S. National Team Development Program. He doesn't believe the Badgers are in decline. "Mike Eaves has a great track record of putting guys in the NHL," Kunin said. "The strength coach, Jim Snider, is good at the off-ice part of the game, which is huge for my development."

Kunin has a wicked release and will

## BADGERS DOWN, KUNIN UP

Kunin is the 27th ranked prospect for the 2016 draft on the October list by International Scouting Services.

been name schools such as Wisconsin and Michigan, which play a high-stakes recruiting game against not only the NHL, but also major junior. "It's a fact of life in college hockey," Eaves said. "We talk as a coaching staff about Plan A, Plan B and worst-case scenario."

The hope in Madison is 2015-16 doesn't represent the last option. With goalies Rumpel and Opilka gone, the team scrambled to bring in 18-year-old Matt Jurusik, who played in the North American League. There is a senior net-minder, Adam Miller, but he has played just two career games for the Badgers.

If you've been wondering how schools such as Yale and Union have won national titles lately, the answer is they had older rosters with few NHL flight risks.

Sometimes, a program doesn't miss a beat. Boston University will replace Eichel with a sweet recruiting class headlined by Charlie McAvoy (2016 eligible), Jordan Greenway (Minnesota) and Jakob Forsbacka-Karlsson (Boston) and an even better haul in 2017 featuring Kieffer Bellows (pg. 51), Chad Krys and Clayton Keller. They are sure to be a tournament team. Wisconsin has a lot further to go, but at least last year's four-win disaster will not be a talking point in Madison. **THE**

**“ WE NEVER GOT REWARDED. WE COULD NEVER GET THE RIGHT LEG ON THE HORSE AND RIDE IT ”**

– Mike Eaves

even younger with 13 freshmen. Goalie Joel Rumpel has graduated. His replacement was supposed to be Luke Opilka, but the 18-year-old scooted to the OHL's Kitchener Rangers after he was drafted by St. Louis. Defenseman Jack Dougherty, the Nashville second-rounder, left for WHL Portland and Vancouver first-

ride left wing and sometimes center. He's quick and has great playmaking abilities.

In an era where top NCAA players such as Jack Eichel, Noah Hanifin and Dylan Larkin are one-and-done to the NHL, college coaches repair rosters on the fly. The programs most affected have



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# WORST LOSS IN NHL HISTORY

Go figure, a goalie nicknamed 'Tubby' was the victim of 15 goals as the war-ravaged Rangers were shut out in Detroit

**H**ALL OF FAME GOALIE GLENN HALL ONCE DESCRIBED THE business of puck-stopping as "sixty minutes of hell." Fortunately, Hall, the man who played 502 consecutive NHL games without a mask, never had to endure the hockey Hades that befell New York Rangers goalie Ken "Tubby" McAuley one night in Detroit. Facing the Red Wings Jan. 23, 1944, McAuley allowed 15 straight goals in what was the most one-sided shutout in NHL history. "Tubby should have been awarded the Croix de Guerre," said Rangers coach Frank Boucher, "if not the Victoria Cross."

Alas, McAuley got neither prize, but he sure grabbed plenty of ink in the NHL Record Book. It included his involvement with the following: most consecutive goals, one team, one game; most points, one team, one game; most goals, one team, one period; and most points, one team, one period.

McAuley never beefed about his fate – he was tickled pink just to be in the bigs in the first place. He was a wartime replacement, one of many stoppers manager Lester Patrick tried to find after 'Sugar' Jim Henry enlisted in the Canadian armed

## LAUGHING MATTER

The Red Wings' lambasting of the Rangers got the cartoon treatment in New York papers.

forces. During 1942-43, one Patrick discovery was worse than the other. The losers list included Jimmy Franks, Bill Beveridge, Lionel Bouvrette and Steve Buzinski, the latter of whom is regarded as the worst goalie ever to go between NHL pipes. Hence, his nickname – Steve Buzinski, "The Puck Goes Inski."

Desperate to avoid another goals-against avalanche for 1943-44, Patrick listened to his scouts. He heard good things about Edmonton native McAuley, who had been playing senior hockey with the Edmonton Maple Leafs, then the Regina Rangers.

Goaltending excellence was a rarity during wartime hockey. Tubby played all 50 Rangers games that season and won a grand total of six. That made it agonizingly tough on the Blueshirts radio broadcasters, play-by-play man Bert Lee and his analyst Ward Wilson. But they found a way to give hope to their avid listeners. Whenever the Blueshirts were behind in a game – which was too often – Lee would turn to his sidekick and opine, "Time enough for one goal, Ward, time enough for 20!" And Wilson, the perfect straight man, would nod his approval.

However, on that fateful night in Detroit not even super-optimist Lee could summon the chutzpah to suggest in the third period that a New York victory was in sight. It already was 8-0 for Detroit at the end of two and 15-0 at the end of three, although some observers believe goal No. 16 beat Tubby before the final buzzer. Which prompts the question: how could an Original Six team redefine futility with Hall of Fame right winger Bryan Hextall and all-star defenseman Ott Heller in the lineup?

Boucher had the answer:

"They were our only real hockey players." He wasn't kidding either. Stripped by wartime enlistments, Patrick was forced to employ no less than 32 players in search of a winning combo. One of those stickhandlers was Boucher himself. Egad! Frank was 42, and the Hall of Fame center had not skated in the NHL for six years. He still managed to produce four goals and 14 points in 15 games and outscored no less than 19 other Rangers that season.

It had been hinted at the time that the club's problems were partly due to Boucher's coaching. But Patrick learned first-hand the Rangers' issues had nothing to do with the bench boss. In his autobiography, *When The Rangers Were Young*, Boucher explained how Patrick got the message. "Just before we left for Detroit," Boucher wrote, "I got a call from Ottawa that my brother Carroll had died, and I told Lester I wanted to go home for a few days. He said of course: that he'd be glad to handle the team in Detroit."

As bad luck would have it, this was the worst decision "The Silver Fox" ever made. Although Patrick had coached the Rangers to Stanley Cups in 1928 and 1933, he never orchestrated so dissonant a lineup as he did that night in the Motor City. "It was," Boucher astutely noted, "a shocking experience for Lester."

Never mind Patrick, what about poor McAuley who faced 62 Wings shots and couldn't have been relieved even if he wanted to get off the hook? Not only did Patrick keep Tubby in goal throughout that dismal season, he rehired him for 1944-45.

Even more bizarre to some who remember that game is the fact Tubby McAuley eventually was inducted into the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame. If you're wondering why, it could well be for merely surviving that shell-shocked night in Detroit. **TMN**

# THE PRINCIPLE & THE MENTOR

Larmer has no regrets about walking out on his ironman streak or taking ethical stands against the Players' Association

BY RYAN KENNEDY

**I**N THE SUMMER OF 1993, STEVE LARMER FOUND HIMSELF ON the cusp of history. He was a successful member of the Chicago Blackhawks – and an incredibly healthy one, at that. Since becoming an NHL regular one decade earlier, the right winger had never missed a game, and as long as that held true for the upcoming campaign, he would break the NHL ironman record of 964 games, set by Doug Jarvis.

But all was not right in Chicago. In what was framed as a contract dispute at the time, Larmer held out, hoping for a trade. When that didn't come to pass by opening night, he stuck to his guns and sat out. The streak was dead.

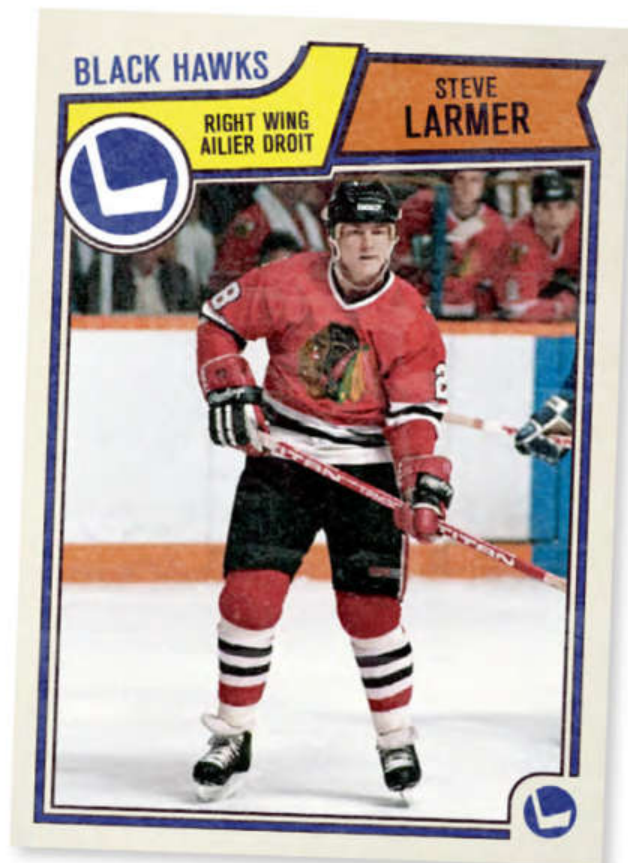
More than 20 years later, you have to wonder if Larmer is still happy with that decision. "Yeah, very happy," Larmer said. "It wasn't even a contract dispute. A lot of players I had played with were gone. We were stuck in neutral. I wanted a change. Either a team with a chance to be a contender or a team with no chance with youth that I could mentor."

That was the first time Larmer stuck to his guns, but it wouldn't be the last. He was a famously principled player and Cup champion who has elicited Hall of Fame calls from Chicago fans who remember his scoring exploits.

Larmer's pro career started in New Brunswick with the AHL's Hawks in 1981-82. Orval Tessier was coach and Larmer got a ton of ice time. The Hawks won the Calder Cup, earning NHL promotions for Tessier and Larmer. As it turns out, coaching and mentoring became central themes in Larmer's career.

With hot-shot Denis Savard already in Chicago, the Hawks would fly, going as far as the conference final before getting swept by Edmonton. Savard and Larmer, both 21 at the time, were 1-2 in team scoring. But the supporting cast was pretty good. "Playing with guys like Darryl Sutter, Doug Wilson, Bob Murray, Tom Lysiak, Tony Esposito... you couldn't have asked for better mentors," Larmer said.

In New York, where he landed – via Hartford – after a pair of Nov. 2, 1993 trades, he was reunited with ex-Chicago coach 'Iron' Mike Keenan, a man who players did not want to run afoul of. "He was...I guess you could say, brutally honest," Larmer said. "In



## DONE AT 884

Larmer's consecutive games streak in Chicago lasted 11 years, ending when he made himself a scratch.

retrospect, he was probably one of the best coaches I ever had."

Keenan was a big believer in conditioning and whipped the Rangers into shape. The 1993-94 roster was stacked with former leaders from Edmonton – Mark Messier, Kevin Lowe and Glenn Anderson – and New York won its first Cup since 1940. It was an incredible experience for Larmer, who retired after one more season – the lockout-shortened 1995 campaign, which, incidentally, gave him a chance to see what life after hockey would be like.

Larmer didn't just fade away. He got involved with the NHLPA, but resigned as head of player relations in 2005 when a small faction hired Ted Saskin as executive director without a union-wide

vote. Larmer returned as an unpaid advisor later, but left again in 2009 under similar circumstances, calling out ex-teammate Chris Chelios for what Larmer believed was a small group exercising too much power. "In both instances, there was disappointment," Larmer said. "They didn't follow their own constitution."

These days, Larmer, 54, leads a quiet life in his hometown of Peterborough. His stepson, Chad Heffernan, plays for the OHL's Sudbury Wolves. **THE**

**“ IN BOTH INSTANCES, THERE WAS DISAPPOINTMENT. THEY DIDN'T FOLLOW THEIR OWN CONSTITUTION – Steve Larmer**



# Guess WHO!



"I scored four game-winning goals in the 1987-88 playoffs as a Detroit Red Wing."

"I was in a huge 1989 trade that sent me to Edmonton and Jimmy Carson to Detroit."

"I ended Game 1 of the 1990 final in triple OT after I was benched most of the game."

## Separated AT BIRTH



**JIRI HUDLER**

Teammate of Jonas Hiller on Flames. Role model won 2015 Lady Byng. Wears Calgary's Twenty-four.



**JOE LO TRUGLIO**

Castmate of Jonah Hill in *Superbad*. Appeared in 2008's *Role Models*. Stars in *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*.

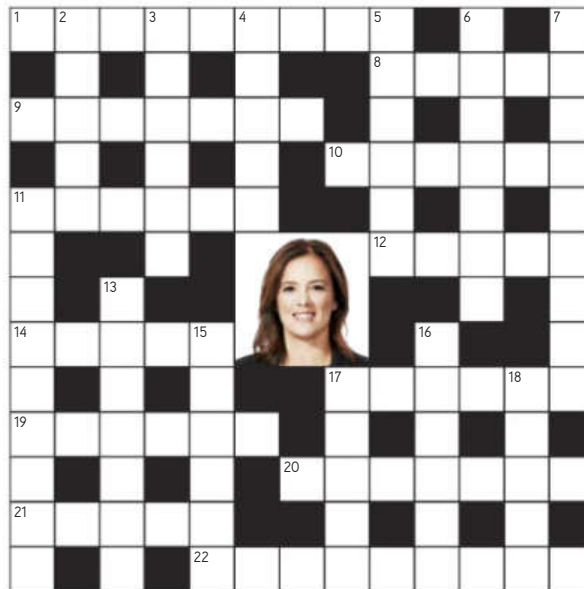
Submitted by:  
Adam Troidl

Email your suggestions to  
[sab@thehockeynews.com](mailto:sab@thehockeynews.com)

AM I : PETR KLIMA

# CROSSWORD

By Larry Humber



ANSWERS AVAILABLE IN THE NEXT ISSUE AND AT [THN.com/XWORD](http://THN.com/XWORD)

**LAST ISSUE'S CROSSWORD SOLUTION ACROSS** 1. TARASENKO, 8. TYLER, 9. TOFFOLI, 10. PASSED, 11. DEMERS, 12. AGENT, 14. CANES, 17. DALLAS, 19. EMELIN, 20. BANDAGE, 21. RINNE, 22. ROCHESTER  
**DOWN** 2. ALONE, 3. ALFRED, 4. ELLIS, 5. OTTAWA, 6. SLASHES, 7. PREDATORS, 11. DON CHERRY, 13. KNEEING, 15. SHINER, 16. BLADES, 17. DEATH, 18. ANGLE

## ACROSS

- 1 The Leafs play at \_\_\_\_ Centre
- 8 Visiting teams now wear \_\_\_\_ after playing in dark for years
- 9 Birthplace of greats like Frank Mahovlich
- 10 Dirk \_\_\_\_ was captain in Chicago
- 11 They represent players at contract time
- 12 It sounds at the end of periods
- 14 NCAA champion Providence College is in \_\_\_\_ Island
- 17 Bill \_\_\_\_ had his No. 7 retired in Philly
- 19 The legendary \_\_\_\_ Campbell-Pascall, pictured, now works for CBC
- 20 An \_\_\_\_ team finishes near the bottom
- 21 San Jose's Matt \_\_\_\_
- 22 Brother of Brian, Brent, Darryl, Duane, Rich

## DOWN

- 2 Sending the puck the length of the rink
- 3 Enforcer Dave Semenko was dubbed '\_\_\_\_ Head'
- 4 Dave \_\_\_\_ was GM in Toronto
- 5 Trophies are dished out on \_\_\_\_ night in Vegas
- 6 'The Rocket'
- 7 Goalkeeper
- 11 Rochester's AHL team
- 13 Hall of Famer known as 'The Gumper'
- 15 Jason Kay is THN's
- 16 Audition
- 17 They share the United Center with the Blackhawks
- 18 Wipe out

## Behind THE MASK



### SERGEI BOBROVSKY | COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS

Columbus' famously deafening cannon, which erupts after Jackets goals, stars on Dave Gunnarsson's new mask design. Mascot 'Stinger' controls a cannon on one side, while a Russian nesting doll works the other, honoring Bobrovsky's heritage. — **MATT LARKIN**



### VICTORIA ROYALS | 2015-16

## Jersey HOUND

WHL hockey returned to Victoria in 2011-12 with the Royals sporting a perfectly serviceable jersey featuring a majestic lion in profile.

But last season, the Royals introduced a new alternate sweater that takes things to a whole 'nother level. This logo, which has the lion staring at you head-on, is far more fearsome and aggressive. It almost looks like a wolverine.

Black used to be an overused jersey color, but that has faded in recent years, so this Victoria version works great, making the lion pop. — **RYAN KENNEDY**



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# A NOTE FROM MOM WILL ALWAYS HELP

No more excuses, Ovie. Just borrow a brilliant, old idea and get your "mother" to write a note to your boss



TODD MCLELLAN

**P**ERHAPS WHAT ALEX OVECHKIN NEEDED more than a trusty alarm clock was a note from Epstein's mother. To get that reference, you'll have to point your pop culture compass to the 1970s and the hit show *Welcome Back, Kotter*. One of the characters, Juan Epstein, would produce hilariously bogus notes signed "Epstein's Mother," to explain his absence from class and general unruliness. Having one might have prevented Ovechkin from earning a one-game suspension when he set his alarm clock for PM instead of AM for a practice in mid-October. Then again, maybe not.

But it got me thinking, what would some of the notes from home look like from people in the hockey world to excuse them or their teams from their actions? Here are a few for your perusal:

## Dear Toronto Maple Leafs fans:

This is to inform you your team has made the playoffs once in 10 years – and it will be 11 after this season – for the following reasons: media pressure, unrealistic expectations, media pressure, unconditional love, media pressure, blue & white disease, media pressure and the fact no team could ever recover from such a devastating loss in Game 7 of the first round and not have its psyche deeply affected. That is, except for the Bruins, who blew a 3-0 lead one spring and came back to win the Cup the next. This is all real and will be for the foreseeable future. Also, Mike will not be at practice today because he's buying Liberia.

*Yours truly,*

**Mike Babcock's mother**

## Dear Mr. Nicholson:

Just wanted to let you know the Oilers stink again because it turns out an 18-year-old kid who still plays *Magic: The Gathering* can't make up for years of terrible personnel decisions, bad draft-

ing and Chris Pronger stiffing us. Jordan Eberle is hurt and these young guys who spent their formative years learning how to lose, well, it turns out they're really good students. We regret to inform you, "*McDavid scores, Oilers lose*" will be a recurring headline. We'll be better next year after we win the draft lottery and get Auston Matthews, we promise.

*Sincerely,*

**Peter Chiarelli's mother  
Todd McLellan's mother**

## Dear hockey fans:

My son Gary and his friend Don would like you to know you won't be attending any games at the World Cup in 2016 unless you have a really fat wallet. They feel a bit bad about that, but they figure that if you're going to hold a trampled-up, meaningless tournament whose only goal is to make money, you'd better do it right. They also realize that people in The Center of the Hockey Universe™ are so starved for good hockey that they and their corporate overlords will be willing to for pay it. The cheapest seats will be a hundred bucks a game and that's before you get a Coca-Cola, which, incidentally, will replace the logo on Russia's uniform.

*Sincerely your\$,*

**Gary Bettman's mother**

## Dear Mr. Anschutz:

You'll be pleased to learn that you own a hockey team called the Los Angeles Kings. They're like that little girl with the curl. When they're good, they're really good, but when they're bad...anyway, enough quoting Longfellow. If you've been reading the papers this summer you'll know why your team is struggling. It has had a few, um, issues with the legal system lately. My Dean promises he'll never get fooled again, though.

*Thank you,*

**Dean Lombardi's mother**

“  
**YOU WON'T BE  
ATTENDING ANY GAMES  
AT THE WORLD CUP  
UNLESS YOU HAVE A  
REALLY FAT WALLET**

## Dear Mrs. Silfverberg:

I want you to know how sorry I feel about how my Raffi almost decapitated your son. His father and I keep telling him he can't tear across the ice drooling with his elbows in the air and expect to be able to play hockey. We've slapped his wrists a number of times and all he does is stick his tongue out and laugh at us. It seems he has a little trouble playing in the sandbox. Says he's just finishing his check, then says something about turning the game into ringette. While he sits in the corner on clothespins, he will be forced to write out, "I will not try to kill people ever again," 17,000 times.

*Blessings,*

**Raffi Torres's mother**

## Dear Calgary Flames board:

This letter is to inform you my Brian will not be wearing his tie today. He will simply have it draped around his neck and his shirt will be unbuttoned. This is by no means a deliberate thing. It's because he's working so much harder than everyone else in hockey and doesn't give a rat's ass what anybody thinks about him. He really doesn't, just ask him.

*Go get stuffed,*

**Brian Burke's mother** TM



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\*Based on a comparison of 2015 EPA highway fuel consumption ratings for 2015 Ram 1500 4cyl with 2.0L EcoDiesel IFE V6 and 8-speed automatic (up to 35 MPG highway) and 2015 Ford F-150 4cyl EcoBoost V6 6-speed automatic (up to 31 MPG highway). †Based on Automotive News Full-Size Pickup segmentation. ‡Optional feature. ‡Based on third-party Canadian competitive "trade-in" data for MY2008 to MY2013 new full-size pickups. ‡When properly equipped. ‡Longevity based on entire Ram Pickup lineup compared to competitive pickups. Based on J.D. Power Automotive Poll Canadian Vehicle in Operation data as of July 1, 2014, for MY 1988-2014 for all large pickups sold and available in Canada over the last 27 years.